

## LICENSING COMMITTEE – 1 JUNE 2010

### LICENSING – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009-10

Report of the: **COMMUNITY AND PLANNING SERVICES DIRECTOR**

Also considered by: Licensing Committee

Status: For Information

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#### **Executive Summary:**

The Sevenoaks District Council licensing team was formed in 2004 to process and grant licences and notices under the Licensing Act 2003, which has been in force since November 2005.

The licensing team processes and grant licences and notices for the Licensing Act 2003, the Gambling Act 2005 (including Small Society Registrations), Taxis, Charity Collections and Sex Establishments.

Sevenoaks District Council's licensing team is responsible for administering some 2,727 licences, with revenue for Licensing in year 2009 – 2010 of £207,023 compared with a budget of £184,353.

Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council formed a Licensing Partnership in 2006, where one manager looked after two separate teams. From 1 January 2010 Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone Borough Councils formed an expanded Licensing Partnership to manage the statutory licensing functions.

The Licensing Partnership has a central administration based at Sevenoaks, with Licensing Officers located at each authority, together with administrative support to deal with customers visiting the Gateways at Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone and the reception at Sevenoaks.

This partnership working arrangement represents an innovative approach to shared service delivery of a licensing service for three councils. The Licensing Partnership initiative is being monitored by the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO), Institute of Licensing and is attracting interest from other licensing authorities around the country.

The centralisation of a back office challenges the way each council currently works by establishing a central licensing administration team based at Sevenoaks, which offers a flexible, multi-skilled resource (with high levels of knowledge and

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**Item No. 4**

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experience), embracing unified working practices exhibiting best working practice, whilst maintaining a high service delivery with excellent customer service.

Residents/licensing applicants in the three council areas apply to the Licensing Partnership for a licence/permit and any licensing hearing will be heard locally by the Licensing Committee ensuring the sovereignty of each local council.

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**This report supports the Key Aim of Safe and Caring Communities and Dynamic and Sustainable Economy**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Mrs Bracken

**Head of Service** Head of Environmental and Operational Services – Mr Richard Wilson

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**Recommendation:** That the Licensing Annual report for 2009/10 be noted

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**Background**

1 The Licensing Annual report is attached as Appendix A

**Key Implications**

Financial

2 The fees for the Licensing Act 2003 are set by Government, whereas the fees for taxi licensing, sex establishments and some of the Gambling Act 2005 are set by each local authority.

3 The licensing team ensures that we are optimising revenue against the individual licences, Notices and permits that we issue.

4 There is an obligation for the Taxi licensing operation to break even and this is reflected in the annual review and process of setting taxi fees.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

5 SDC Legal team is involved in all aspects of licensing including training, advising at Licensing Sub Groups, as part of the partnership and full committee meetings, as well as overseeing licensing prosecutions.

Resource (non-financial)

6 The day-to-day running of the licensing team at SDC is carried out by the Assistant Licensing Manager. In addition the team has two Licensing Officer (one part time) and two full time equivalent administration officers.

**Item No. 4**

Equality

- 7 The licensing function has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessments during 2009-10.
- 8 Working within a diverse culture, where for people running licensed premises, English is not their first language, we have developed a multi lingual front-page briefing.

**Conclusions**

- 9 The licensing authority is required to deliver a professional service of processing, validating and issuing different licences within the statutory legal timeframe.
- 10 There is a continuing objective to fully develop a “Centre of excellence for licensing” by aligning resource against need in the most cost effective way without reducing customer service.

**Risk Assessment Statement**

- 11 Every enforcement activity undertaken by the Licensing Officers is risk assessed before implementation.
- 12 All Licensing Officers are compliant to SDC lone working policy.

**Sources of Information:** Sevenoaks District Council Statement of Licensing Policy  
Agresso financial system  
Portfolio Holder monthly reports

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**COMMUNITY AND PLANNING SERVICES DIRECTOR  
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