

LICENSING PARTNERSHIP UPDATE REPORT FOR YEAR 2023/24

Licensing Committee - 12th September 2024

Report of: Chief Officer Planning and Regulatory Services

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report is an annual update on the performance and activity of the Licensing Partnership

This report supports the Key Aim of: Sustainable Economy

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Irene Roy

Contact Officer: Sharon Bamborough, Ext. 7325

Recommendation to Licensing Committee :

To note the performance of the Licensing Partnership as contained within the report and to ask the Head of the Licensing Partnership to continue to provide an annual update on the Licensing Partnership activity to the Licensing Committee each municipal year.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure the Licensing Committee are updated on the performance of the Licensing Partnership.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council is a member of the Licensing Partnership with Maidstone Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and London Borough of Bexley, which provides line management responsibilities to their respective licensing enforcement teams and an administration team at Sevenoaks to carry out the processing of licence applications, notices, permits and representations.
- 2 The Licensing Partnership has completed 14 years of working together, with London Borough of Bexley becoming a partner as of 31st October 2016.
- 3 This arrangement provides each council with sovereignty over its policies and decision making processes whilst operating within a partnership that gives resilience and capacity to deal with the fluctuating demands on the service through the year.
- 4 This report is an annual update on the performance and activity of the Licensing Partnership.

2023 - 2024 Performance report

- 5 The performance of the Licensing Partnership has been generally very good.
- 6 The indicators for each of the four authorities and the combined Licensing Partnership results are attached as **Appendix A**
- 7 The general processing and consultation on applications within timeframe has been maintained but there will have been times when performance may not have hit targets. This would have been to various factors, such as the usual annual leave as well as staff vacancies/recruitment/training.
- 8 The Partnership handled a large amount of work in 2023/24, application volumes have returned to pre-pandemic levels, and the teams have been busy. The performance measures should be read in conjunction with the entire volumes of work delivered. The headlines of the performance are as follows:
 - In this time period, over 9700 applications, notices, permits and other pieces of work were received / carried out across the partnership.
 - From this total, over 2628 pieces of work were for Sevenoaks.
 - Taking into account the different amounts of time needed for different types of applications, and the differing nature of the work carried out for some of the partners, Sevenoaks' share of processing work accounted for approx. 29% of the processing work of the entire partnership in 2023/24
 - Just under **28,400** emails were received in the main Licensing inbox and actioned for all four partners, Sevenoaks' share was 8775

- Just over **7,660** calls were received to main licensing hotline and dealt with by the Hub team for all four partners. Sevenoaks' share was 2695

Performance against Service Plan objectives 2023/24

11 **Objective 1:** *To oversee and lead the Licensing Partnership to deliver efficiency savings and achieve performance targets*

a) This is ongoing and performance is monitored on a weekly and monthly basis. Please see Appendix A for a report on Key Performance Indicator targets.

b) 1:1 meetings and regular face to face meeting with staff are carried out routinely

c) the Licensing Partnership Board meets 4 times a year.

Performance against the targets is included in Appendix A

12 **Objective 2:** *Be open and proactive about undertaking of licensing functions for other local authorities.*

Result: achieved, in that we remain open to discussion and approach, but have not received any expressions of interest. Our officers attend multi LA meetings across Kent and report back that they use those opportunities to promote the partnership.

13 **Objective 3:** *Seek further efficiency savings*

- Continuous review of processes and procedures of Hub team officers and streamline / change as and when requested by partner officers. This year the following processes will be reviewed:
 1. TENs
 2. Personal licences
 3. Transfer of premises licence
 4. DPS variations
 5. Taxis - temporary replacement vehicle
 6. Taxis - drivers
 7. Taxis - Vehicles
 8. Taxis - Operators
- Review of online facilities including continued development of online application forms

- Review of back office system database and assess against other alternative providers (MM & SB)

Result: achieved (resulting in time savings or better working practices)

14 **Objective 4:** Undertake necessary projects which deliver or enhance the service provision

- Action emails from Companies House which advise on changes to company status etc **result: achieved**
- MBC only - complete the transfer of electronic data from old software system to Idox/Uniform so that records are complete and historic data is available to all **result - started but ongoing**
- HUB team -re Premises licences issued under Licensing Act 2003, carry out the review of new rateable values (RVs) from Valuation Office Agency and update the database with any changed RVs before invoices are raised (this review from VOA happens every 5 years) **result - achieved**

(i) New procedure for pre-application advice to be agreed and introduced (SB) **result - produced not implemented yet (awaiting feedback)**

(ii) New procedure for recording of complaints / investigations - to be recorded on the database going forward once introduced (SB) **RESULT - ACHIEVED BUT IN TESTING PHASE WITH SDC**

(iii) Have the current partnership agreement reviewed and brought up to date in terms of format (SB / legal) **RESULT - REDRAFTED BUT BOARD STILL CONSIDERING WHAT CHANGES THEY WANT IMPLEMENTED**

15 **Objective 5:** Undertake a programme of training for Members and officers. Ensure all new Members on each Licensing Committee receive appropriate training.

Result: training has been given as and when required

16 **Objective 6:** Revision of Policies

- In 2023, SB to review Cumulative Impact Area policy for LBB (**achieved**)
- In 2023, SB to review the Pavement licensing policy once confirmation is received that the scheme will be made permanent and in line with new legislation (**achieved**)

- To review taxi policies in Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks as and when needed. (Senior Licensing Officers) **(achieved)**
- To continue to take part in the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Implementation Plan lead by KCC (for SDC/MBC/TWBC only) (SB and Senior Licensing Officers) which may lead to revision of taxi policies re green vehicles **(achieved)**

17 **Objective 7 - Health, Safety and Well Being of Staff**

- Ensure risk assessments are carried out and reviewed as appropriate and at least once a year.

Result: achieved

- Ensure 1:1 meetings are carried out on a regular basis.

Result: achieved

- Ensure staff have complied with any employer requirements in terms of completing workstation assessments both in office and at home if working from home occurs.

Result: achieved

The new service plan for 2024/25 is attached as **Appendix B**

Key Implications

Financial

Financial implications have been dealt with in the body of the report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

This is a report to update on the progress of the Licensing Partnership. There are no legal implications as it is for information only.

Equality Assessment

The information contained within this report have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Climate Change Implications

The information contained within this report have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to tackle the challenge of climate change. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment

Appendices

Appendix A - Performance data

Appendix B - Service plan for 2024/25

Background Papers

None

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services