



Shared Service: Licensing

Shared service commenced: 01 January 2019

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Overview of the shared service arrangement:

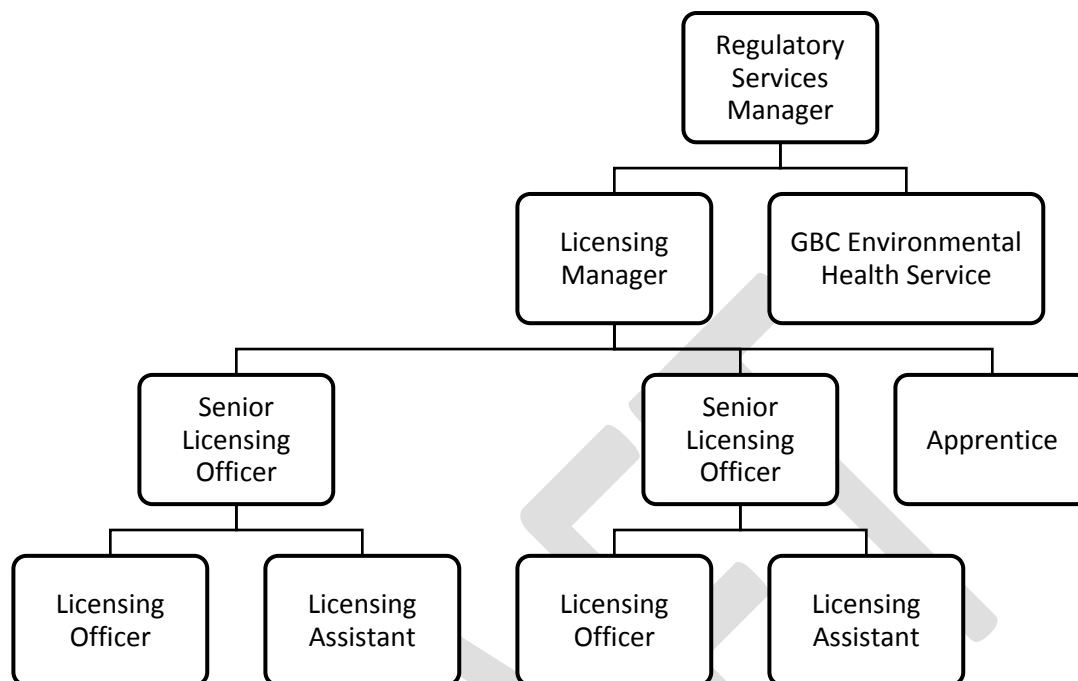
A summary of the structure of the shared service and the services provided. Include any details of changes that have taken place with regards to the shared service in the past 12 months.

The Shared Licensing Service sits within Gravesham Borough Council's Regulatory Services, within the Communities directorate.

The team are responsible for discharging Gravesham Borough Council's and Medway Council's licensing functions in terms of administering and regulating the licensing regimes in respect of:

- Premises/clubs selling alcohol or providing regulated entertainment or late night refreshment
- Temporary Event Notices
- Personal alcohol licences
- Taxi and private hire drivers and vehicles, and private hire operators
- Gambling premises and activities
- Sex establishments
- Scrap metal
- Charitable collections

The current structure is depicted below:



One of the Licensing Assistant posts became vacant towards the end of 2021. Consideration is currently being given as to whether to seek to fill the post on a like for like basis or to use the opportunity to make alternative improvements to the staffing arrangements.

Progress against objectives:

| | Objective | Update |
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| 1 | Efficiency savings. Realising actual financial savings across the two sites but maintaining delivery of the service. | <p>During 2021/21, despite continued challenges arising from the pandemic, we continued to build on our already impressive digital offering through such means as: expanding our online payment facilities for such applications as Street Trading Consents, Scrap Metal Licences, Lotteries and miscellaneous administrative processes; creating even more online forms for taxi and private hire licence holders; and setting up/sending more automated reminders (via email and SMS) to licence holders to help them keep on top of licence renewal deadlines and expiring insurance policies, etc.</p> <p>In recent weeks, an innovative new online application form and process went live for charitable street collection applications in Gravesham which, following a short trial period, will be expanded to include Medway applications too.</p> <p>The ongoing financial savings arising from the comprehensive restructure which took effect from April</p> |

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| | | 2019 following the TUPE transfer of all ex-Medway employees of the licensing team in January remain in place. |
| 2 | Added resilience across the two authorities. There will be a larger pool of officers covering both authorities providing additional resilience to cover sickness absence/vacancies or increased workload should this be required | <p>Despite the team suffering an ongoing reduction in staff arising from long-term sickness and a subsequent vacancy, the service has continued to be progressive in developing better ways of working whilst managing to maintain all statutory functions, thanks to collective hard work and dedication of the officers and managers directly involved, alongside colleagues in other areas such as Digital, Finance and IT with whom Licensing work closely. This has suitably demonstrated the intended benefit of, and need for, maintaining a large pool of offers for resilience.</p> <p>It is considered that this has, at least in part, only been possible however because of all staff being, necessarily, more computer-based (i.e. not out on district) - initially due to the work required as part of the ongoing shared service set-up and more recently due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As field duties start to resume for compliance and enforcement elements, so too will the need to ensure sufficient staffing resource is maintained to ensure continuity of the, largely statutory, desk-based functions.</p> |
| 3 | Availability of specialist skills across both authorities leading to increased efficiency; potential for a reduced requirement for external support from contractors etc. | Access to a wider pool of specialists across both council's, e.g. Public Health, IT, Digital, Environmental Health, Legal and Finance, continues to facilitate diversification of the advice and guidance available to the Shared Licensing Service to inform decisions, facilitate change, and expand knowledge. |
| 4 | Sharing of best practice in the delivery of the Licensing Service | (Grouped with objective 5, below) |
| 5 | Expansion of knowledge base of individual officers | <p>All five front-line members of the team, i.e. the two Licensing Officers, two Senior Licensing Officers and the Licensing Manager have passed the Institute of Licensing accredited Professional Licensing Practitioner Qualification (PLPQ), making them a formidable team of licensing practitioners. Additionally, our Licensing Assistant has proven to be a real asset to the team and is due to undertake the PLPQ during 22/23.</p> <p>Staff have continued to frequently liaise with one another, including during weekly team meetings, and are now very used to working effectively in a hybrid manner as part of cohesive and collaborative team working.</p> <p>Their knowledge and continued approach towards embracing change, coupled with a high level of managerial,</p> |

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| | | <p>administrative and technical support has continued to prove invaluable in progressing the shared service to date.</p> <p>Regular (virtual) attendance at the Kent and Medway Regulatory Licensing Steering Group and IOL Regional Training Events, etc. also supports these objectives.</p> <p>Also see Objective 8, below.</p> |
| 6 | Completing the work required to 'set-up' the shared service, with full and prioritised support from other services as required. | All such 'set-up' work has now been successfully completed or is no longer deemed necessary (e.g. setting up of dedicated work stations at Gun Wharf now that staff are accustomed to working remotely), thereby allowing staff to feel more settled into their usual day to day activities and refocus their attentions to enhancing other elements of the service, such as its ongoing digitisation/modernisation (as further outlined below), the timely collection of fees, and compliance and enforcement. |
| 7 | Delivering an enhanced digital service, making full use of available technology. | <p>We continue to be highly successful and innovative in this regard. Updates demonstrating our ongoing efforts in relation to this are provided under bullet point 1, above.</p> <p>Our digital services played a key role in enabling smooth continuity of service throughout the pandemic.</p> |
| 8 | Ensuring staff are adequately trained and supported. | <p>Training remained at a lower level during 20/21, however we have continued to support continuous professional, and personal, development so far as possible since early 21/22 through attendance of relevant (mostly virtual) training courses, coaching and mentoring, and experiential learning, etc.</p> <p>All Licensing Staff have completed mandatory safeguarding training and the Licensing Manager and Senior Licensing Officers have completed Coaching in the Workplace and Managing Hybrid Teams training in order to better support their staff. Officers have also attended other courses and seminars such as the Gambling Conference, Pavement Licensing Training, and Tax Conditionality Summit.</p> <p>Management have continued to liaise with staff frequently and be available to them at all times with an open door policy.</p> |
| 9 | Realising procedural efficiencies to enable staff to recommence more field-based duties. | Field-based duties are gradually resuming, albeit not yet to any notable level. This still remains an area of focus and in need of progression, but this will need to go hand in hand with ensuring sufficient desk-based staffing resources remain in place. |

Key Performance Measures:

| | | Target 2020/21 | Outturn 2020-21 |
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| 1 | No shared service KPIs are in place. Instead, the Shared Licensing Service reports on different KPIs for Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council, as previously agreed with senior management at each council, respectively. Medway Licensing KPIs were reviewed and updated during 2021/22. | N/A | N/A |

Update against recommendations identified in previous year review:

There were no additional recommendations following the review of the shared service in 2020-21.

Recommendations/Service Improvements for the coming year:

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| 1 | Shared Service to continue |
| 2 | - |
| 3 | - |