



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.

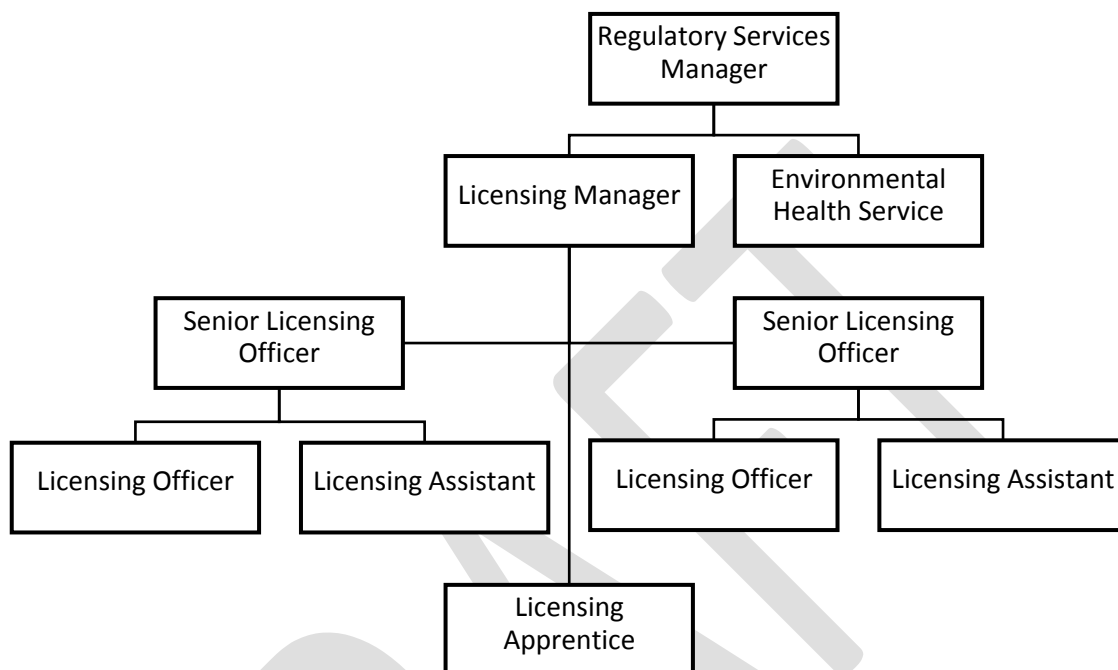
The team are responsible for discharging Gravesham Borough Council's and Medway Council's licensing functions in terms of administering and regulating the licensing regimes in respect of:

- 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
- Pavement licences
- Street Trading

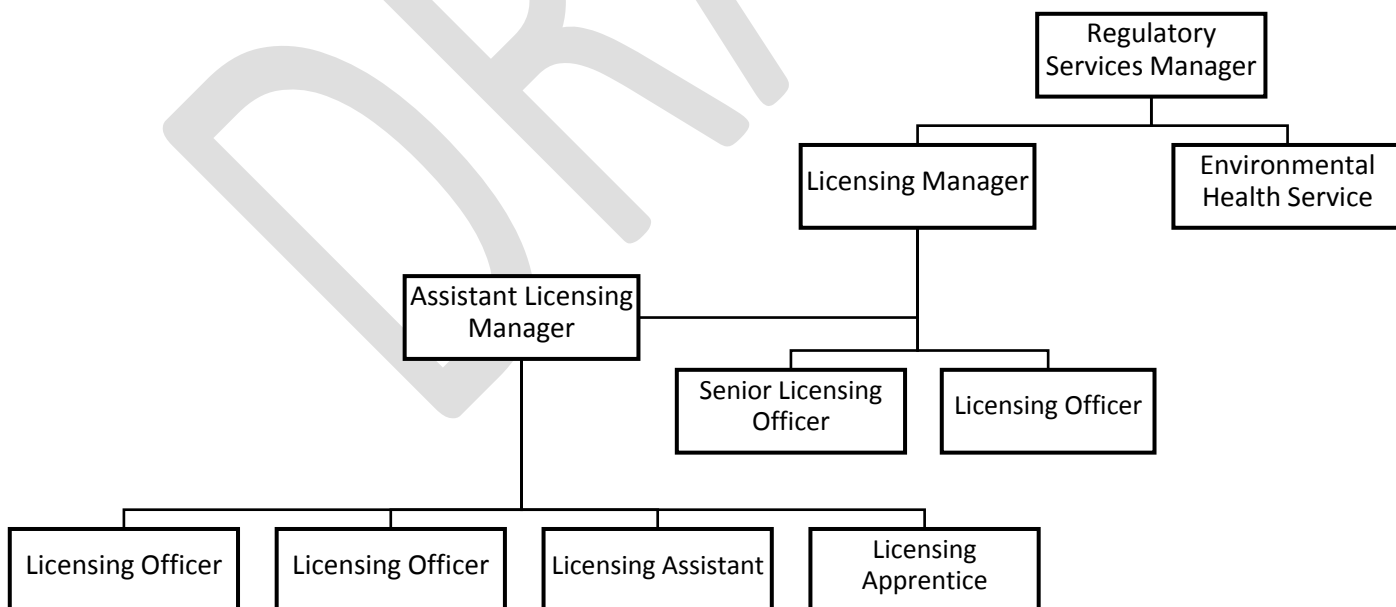
During the last 12 months, the vacant Licensing Assistant and Licensing Apprentice posts have been successful filled, providing the team with a full complement of staff for the first time since the commencement of the shared service.

This has enabled progress to be made in carrying out compliance and enforcement activities including enhancing fee collection and associated interventions following non-payment.

The current established structure is depicted below:



However, a temporary change to this structure is currently in place as follows:



Despite the above depicted arrangement being made in response to additional duties already being undertaken by two members of staff, it appears to be working to extremely good effect operationally, as well as providing greater career progression opportunities and succession planning measures.

Progress against objectives:

	Objective	Update
1	Efficiency savings. Realising actual financial savings across the two sites but maintaining delivery of the service.	<p>During 2022/23, we continued to build on our already impressive digital offering which now includes the online street collection application form for Medway (as well as Gravesham) referred to in the last update, featuring automated internal consultation with Town Centre Management, responses, and logging functions.</p> <p>A particularly notable achievement in this area has been in relation to the commencement and hugely successful implementation of Gravesham's taxi and private hire (PH) vehicle inspections being carried out by Rosherville Servicing Ltd at the council's Brookvale depot workshop. To ensure a seamless transition and excellent user-experience, we worked closely with Digital and IT and depot colleagues to design and create an efficient end-to-end and interlinked online process, including automatic reminder texts and emails to licence holders, online applications with slot allocation and payment facilities, inspection forms that link directly to the licensing database, and outcome emails back to the licence holders to conclude the process. This commercially innovative achievement has provided the Gravesham taxi and PH trade with a simple, reliable and quality service through a single point of contact, whilst helping to ensure that standards of vehicles are suitably maintained to promote public safety.</p> <p>In addition, we are currently working with colleagues in our IT and Digital Teams to create interactive online licensing registers to better meet customer expectations whilst also providing a self-help FOI portal. Efficiencies are also being sought through the creation of multifaceted online forms to handle Designated Premises Supervisor variation, transfer of owner, Minor Variation and Full Variation of premises applications. Moving forwards, we still plan to provide a complete suite of online Licensing Act 2003 forms to pre-empt the eventual termination of the GOV.UK forms, and create additional auto-populating templates for premises licences, etc.</p> <p>The ongoing financial savings arising from the comprehensive restructure which took effect from April 2019 following the TUPE transfer of all ex-Medway employees of the licensing team in January remain in place.</p>
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>The original restructure retained the same number of posts as previously existed across the two separate teams, resulting in a larger, single pool of officers to provide added resilience to cover the work of both Licensing Authorities.</p> <p>This resilience has repeatedly proved essential in ensuring continuity of service during periods of staff sickness and vacant posts, and to cope with additional burdens - a current example being the re-rating of business premises in respect of non-domestic rateable values, which statutory annual licence fees are based on. This has resulted in officers having to undertake an additional and very onerous task of individually checking the annual fees for all licenced premises across both authorities (c.1000) and updating the finance and back-office systems in each case to ensure correct invoicing and accurate maintenance of records.</p>

		<p>More recently and following successful appointments to the vacant Licensing Assistant and Apprentice posts, the structure and work of both the team and individual officers were evaluated. The outcome was the implementation of the temporary structure shown at the bottom of page 2 which still retains the same number of staff as in the established structure, but with two members of staff undertaking additional duties and associated changes being made to reporting lines.</p> <p>Recruitment to the vacant posts coupled with the revised structure has enabled the team to continue to provide the largely statutory, and increasingly demanding, desk-based functions, as well as resuming previously lacking compliance and enforcement activities which are essential for supporting the licensing objectives across all regimes in order to help our local economies thrive, maintain high standards in accordance with local policy, and ensure public safety, as well as maximising income from licence fees; in just four months following the implementation of the revised structure and fully staffed team, some £27k of overdue invoices has been collected by officers on behalf of both councils.</p> <p>The Teams' ability, through their hard work and dedication, to provide an excellent shared service demonstrates the intended benefits of, and continued need for, maintaining a large pool of officers in a suitably structured team for resilience.</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 support diversification of the advice and guidance available to the Shared Licensing Service to inform decisions, facilitate change, function effectively, 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 six front-line members of the team under the current (temporary) arrangement, i.e., all but the new Licensing Assistant and Apprentice, are highly trained, having achieved the Institute of Licensing accredited Professional Licensing Practitioner Qualification (PLPQ). Where identified as beneficial, staff are also supported in undertaking additional training relevant to their roles and development.</p> <p>Staff continue to liaise frequently with one another, including during ongoing weekly team meetings where they share information and collectively ascertain how to deal with more complex matters as part of cohesive and collaborative team working.</p> <p>Their knowledge and continued approach towards embracing change and supporting one another, coupled with a high level of managerial, administrative, and technical support, has continued to prove invaluable in progressing the shared service to date. This is</p>

		<p>being seen currently, in the in-house training and development of our two new starters, who are progressing quickly.</p> <p>Regular attendance at the Kent and Medway Regulatory Licensing Steering Group and IOL Regional Training Events, etc. also supports this objective.</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.	N/A as all set-up work is complete.
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 and continue to assist the team in being able to cope with additional burdens and changes to licensing regimes, e.g., pavement licensing, additional taxi and private hire DBS checks requirements, tax code checks, changing right to work check requirements, revised statutory guidance documents, re-rating of non-domestic rateable values, and carrying out checks on the NR3 register (a national register that all authorities update and check with regard to revocations and refusals of licences) for every new or renewed hackney carriage and private hire driver licence.</p> <p>Officers are now also set up as users for Medway Employment Check to create and process DBS applications online, albeit the majority are now carried out via the DBS Update Service.</p>
8	Ensuring staff are adequately trained and supported.	<p>We have continued to support continuous professional and personal development through attendance of relevant (mostly virtual) training courses, coaching and mentoring, and experiential learning, etc. as referenced in Objective 5, above.</p> <p>The Licensing Manager and Acting Assistant Licensing Manager are booked to attend the 'Bystander' training arranged by the Council which will be disseminated to the rest of the team later in the year, and the Acting Licensing Officer has recently attended PACE interview training with the Institute of Licensing.</p> <p>All members of the team have also been working through online accessibility training to ensure that everything they place on our website is equally accessible to all service users.</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.	As had previously been anticipated, field-based duties have now resumed and continue to be progressed as a result of an appropriately resourced and structured team coupled with efficient procedural processes.

Key Performance Measures:

		Target 2021/22 & 2022/23 to date	Outturn 2021/22 & 2022/23 to date
1	No shared KPIs are in place. Instead, performance is monitored through the reporting of separate corporate delivery indicators and update reports agreed with senior management at each council respectively, which have been positively received to date with no concerns raised.	(Please see note to left)	(Please see note to left)

Update against recommendations identified in previous year review:

There were no additional recommendations following the review of the shared service in 2021-22.

Recommendations/Service Improvements for the coming year:

1	Shared Service to continue
2	-
3	-