



Shared Service: Licensing

Shared service commenced: 01 January 2019

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Review Date: March 2024

Overview of the shared service arrangement:

The Shared Licensing Service sits within Gravesham Borough Council's Community Protection Service, within the Communities and Inclusive Growth 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

Staffing and Team Structure

The original Licensing Service Structure, put in place when the shared service commenced, is shown in Appendix A.

In November 2022, the team became fully staffed for the first time since the commencement of the shared service following successful recruitment to the vacant Licensing Assistant and Licensing Apprentice posts. This enabled progress to be made in carrying out proactive compliance and enforcement activities including fee collection and associated interventions following non-payment.

Around the same time, two members of the team were awarded additional duties payments to reflect roles in which they were 'acting up', and changes temporarily made to reporting lines within the team. These changes are reflected in the temporary Licensing Service Structure shown in Appendix B.

However, in summer 2023 one of the Licensing Officers and a Licensing Assistant resigned (both for non-work-related reasons). The impacts of this on pro-active compliance and enforcement and other areas of work were further compounded by two additional members of staff being absent on long term sickness during the October and November, resulting in the team having to re-focus on statutory duties pending approval for recruitment to the vacant posts.

Following the successes of the temporary structure which proved to work well operationally, as well as in providing greater career progression opportunities and succession planning measures, approval was given by Management Team to make this structure permanent and recruit to the vacant posts.

A copy of the current Licensing Service Structure reflecting this is attached at Appendix C.

The resultant vacant Licensing Assistants posts have now been successfully filled (one in November 2023 by the then Licensing Apprentice who will continue to complete their apprenticeship on a day-release basis until its completion in March 2024, after which we will recruit to the Apprentice post, and the other in February 2024) bringing the team back to full capacity.

Throughout the team's periods of reduced capacity, staff remained committed to ensuring a high standard of service provision resulting in statutory duties and timescales being met, and monthly targeted officer interventions and enforcement in relation unpaid/overdue annual premises licence fees across both authorities continuing.

Progress against objectives:

	Objective	Update
1	Efficiency savings. Realising actual financial savings across the two sites but maintaining delivery of the service.	<p>During 2023/24, the team has continued to build on their impressive suite of online licensing applications for both Medway and Gravesham.</p> <p>All applications and requests for changes in relation to Hackney Carriage, Private Hire and Premises Licences have been completed and are live. The Premises Licence suite of online applications on GOV.UK forms for the Licensing Act 2003 applications have been disabled, enabling the team to manage all applications in a more efficient and reliable way.</p> <p>The team are continuing to work with the IT and Digital Teams to create online applications for Club Premises Certificates, requests for changes and interactive online licensing registers to better meet customer expectations and reduce the burdens arising from FOI requests.</p> <p>The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle inspections being carried out by Rosherville Servicing Ltd continues with its success in generating addition income to GBC and enhancing the safety and standards of our licensed vehicles.</p> <p>The ongoing financial savings arising from the formation of the shared licensing service 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. This benefit remains in place, with subsequent restructures being implemented to support the emerging needs of the service.</p> <p>This resilience has repeatedly proved essential to cope with the additional burdens arising from new and expanding/evolving licensing regimes, and in ensuring continuity of service during periods of staff shortages and absence through sickness and annual leave, for example.</p> <p>Monthly debt collection from unpaid annual fees continues to be undertaken and visits are made to licensed premises to explain to the licence holder that if they fail to pay the annual fee their licence must be suspended until such time as the payment has been made. These visits usually result in the debt being cleared immediately.</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	<p>The team continue to work effectively in a hybrid arrangement and 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>Regular attendance at the Kent and Medway Regulatory Licensing Steering Group and liaison with its members also supports this objective.</p>
5	Expansion of knowledge base of individual officers	<p>All five front-line members of the team, i.e., all but the Licensing Assistants and Apprentice, are highly qualified, having achieved the Institute of Licensing accredited Professional Licensing Practitioner Qualification (PLPQ).</p> <p>Staff are supported in undertaking training relevant to their roles, including regime-specific courses and attendance at relevant Institute of Licensing Regional Training Events, etc. to ensure they keep updated on legal, procedural, and best-practice developments.</p> <p>They are also encouraged to partake in corporate working groups, etc. to further enhance their personal development, networking and knowledge of the authority.</p> <p>The teams first Licensing Apprentice is due to complete their Level 3 NVQ in the coming weeks and was successful in their application to one of the vacant Licensing Assistant posts, demonstrating the benefit of maintaining an apprentice post.</p> <p>Their knowledge and ongoing approach towards embracing change, coupled with a high level of managerial, administrative, and technical support, has continued to prove invaluable in progressing the shared service to date.</p>
6	Completing the work required to 'set-up' the shared service, with full and prioritised support from other services as required.	This objective is no longer applicable as all set-up work is complete.
7	Delivering an enhanced digital service, making full	The shared service continues to be highly successful and innovative in this regard. Updates demonstrating their

	use of available technology.	<p>ongoing efforts in relation to this are provided under bullet point 1, above.</p> <p>According to their software system provider, they are amongst the most digitally advanced and innovative Licensing Services, benefiting from such solutions as online applications, automatic data population, automatic reminders, and clear yet comprehensive information and guidance pages on our website.</p> <p>This assists the team in being able to cope with additional burdens and changes to licensing regimes.</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, seminars, coaching and mentoring, and experiential learning, etc. as referenced in the above paragraphs.</p> <p>The Licensing Manager and Assistant Licensing Manager attended the 'By-stander' training arranged by Gravesham Borough Council and this will be disseminated to the rest of the team later in the year.</p> <p>Most members of the team have also completed online accessibility training, which ensures that everything we place on our website, content and application forms, meets the accessibility requirements.</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.	<p>More field-based duties will now be able to recommence as a result of an appropriately resourced and structured team coupled with ongoing efforts to put in place efficient procedural processes.</p>

Key Performance Measures:

		Target 2023-24	Outturn 2023-24
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)

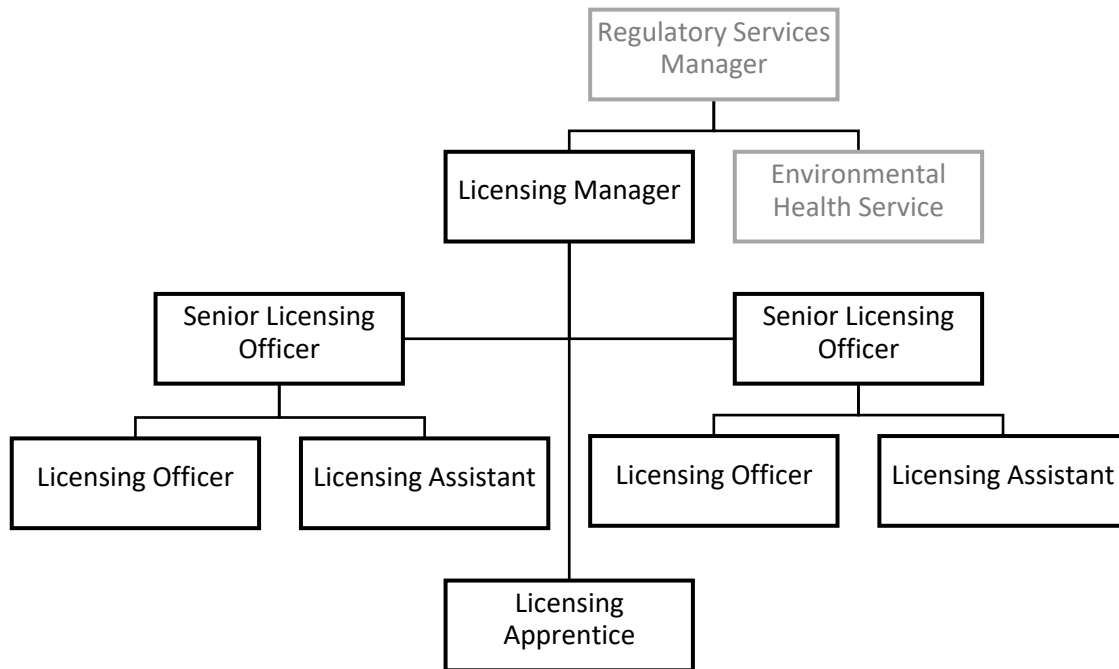
Update against recommendations identified in previous year review:

There were no additional recommendations following the review of the shared service in 2022-23.

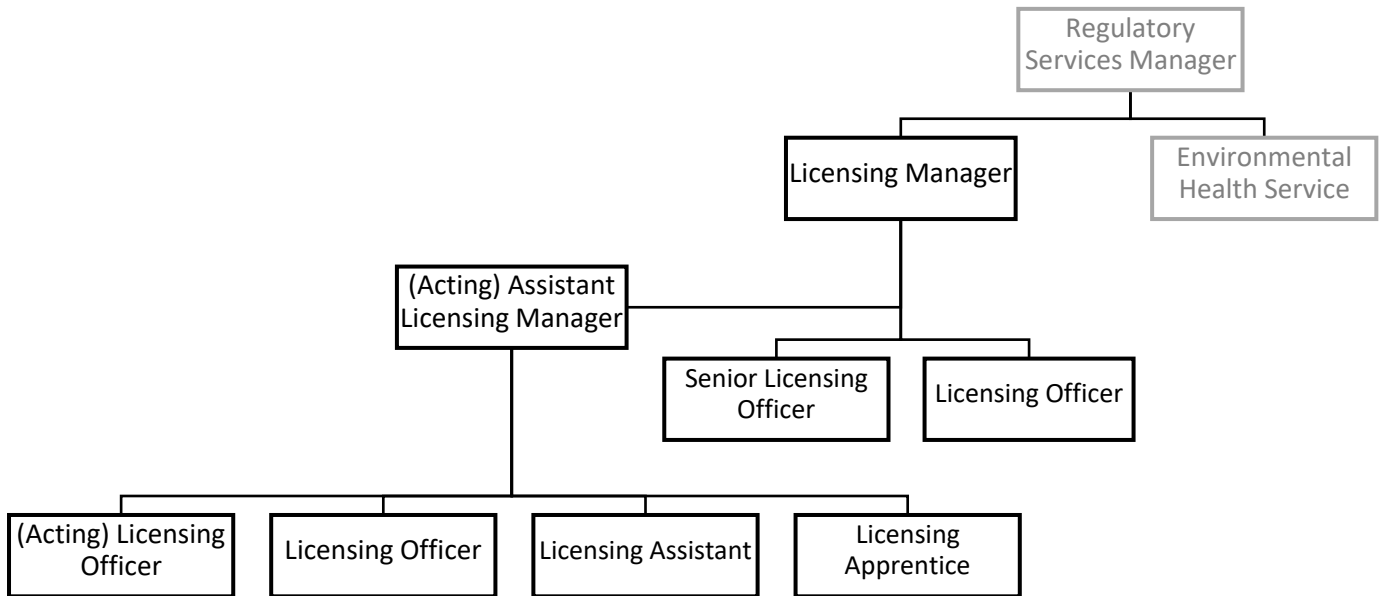
Recommendations/Service Improvements for the coming year:

1	Shared Service to continue
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Original Licensing Service Structure



Temporary Licensing Service Structure



The current established structure is depicted below:

