



## LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

27 AUGUST 2019

### UPDATE ON THE SHARED LICENSING SERVICE BETWEEN GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL AND MEDWAY COUNCIL

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#### Summary

This report updates Members on the progress of the Shared Licensing Service between Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council.

#### 1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Licensing functions are largely non-executive. Where decisions are not delegated to officers under the Employee Delegation Scheme, decision making is predominantly made by the Licensing and Safety Committee or its Sub-Committees under delegations from Full Council.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Medway Council approached Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) regarding the potential to share a service for Licensing due to the Licensing Manager at Medway Council choosing to take retirement at the end of April 2018 and as part of the digitalisation programme.
- 2.2 On 19 July 2018, Full Council agreed to delegate responsibility for the discharge of its Licensing Service non-executive functions to Gravesham Borough Council. It further agreed that all non-executive licensing delegations currently with the Chief Legal Officer can also be exercised by Gravesham Borough Council's Assistant Director (Communities).

- 2.3 A shared service arrangement was formally entered in to with effect from 1 January 2019 with Gravesham Borough Council as the host authority for the shared service and Medway Council Licensing officers TUPE transferring to Gravesham Borough Council employment.
- 2.4 The Licensing team have, not only stayed on top of their day-to-day statutory duties, but also continued to successfully adapt and implement operational changes in preparation for the final movement of data, files/folders, systems, processes and staff to Gravesham.
- 2.5 Following a re-structure savings have been made and further work is on-going to identify further savings where possible to reduce budget pressures. As an example, the increased use of digital media and contact via email is dramatically reducing printing and postage costs. Service changes that attract additional costs may be recoverable through locally set licence fees, and this will always be considered to ensure the service operates on a cost-neutral basis.
- 2.6 During the transitional shared service period (during much of 2019) non-statutory activity will be delivered in a more efficient targeted way to ensure greater capacity for the team's statutory work and the introduction of a new case management system. Over time as other team efficiencies are introduced there should be an ability for increased enforcement work such as planned operations in both areas.
- 2.7 Medway's new taxi and private hire driver online knowledge test has been successfully running in parallel with Gravesham's out of Mid Kent College in Gillingham for several months now. This is providing an enhanced service for customers and reduced time implications for licensing staff in terms of creating and marking test papers. This has also allowed us to introduce a module on Child Sexual Exploitation/safeguarding awareness, which is a priority for both councils.
- 2.8 The migration of data from Medway's IDOX Acolaid system to Gravesham's IDOX Uniform system (led by IDOX) is still underway, but due to complete in autumn 2019.

### 3. Risk management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>
Either party chooses to terminate the delegation.	Gravesham Borough Council permanently takes on the responsibility for and costs of providing Medway's Licensing Service functions. Either party may choose to end the shared service or the arrangement fails, leaving Gravesham with additional costs and Medway with no licensing service.	Medway's formal delegation and decision to share services approved by its Full Council. The formal legal agreement includes exit arrangements with appropriate notice periods for seeking to vary or terminate the services.
Failure to deliver effective service	The proposed service is a reduction on existing resources and a new way of working; it may fail to deliver an effective shared licensing service for Medway and/or Gravesham Councils.	The formal legal agreement includes required outputs and how performance will be measured, monitored and reported.
Staff grievance	Changes to staff terms and conditions may not be introduced appropriately.	HR staff from both Councils were involved in the project and led on this work-stream.

### 4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Licensing Services staff in post at Medway Council transferred to Gravesham Borough Council's payroll on 1 January 2019. A review has subsequently been undertaken of the structure of the Licensing Team to ensure that all officers are in the correct posts in order to maximise their expertise across the shared working arrangement.
- 4.2 Further savings are anticipated as part of a shared service, particularly through efficiencies brought about by digitalisation.

### 5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The shared service was achieved in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 whereby Medway Council delegated to Gravesham Borough Council its Licensing functions.
- 5.2 All licensing delegations currently with the Council's Chief Legal Officer can also be exercised by Gravesham Borough Council's Assistant Director (Communities).

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 That the Licensing Committee note this update report.

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### **Background Papers:**

None