

Medway Council
Meeting of Licensing and Safety Committee
Tuesday, 27 August 2019
6.00pm to 6.36pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Bhutia, Browne, Carr, Mrs Diane Chambers (Chairman), Fearn (Vice-Chairman), Hackwell, Mahil, McDonald, Prenter and Mrs Elizabeth Turpin
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Curry (Substitute for Lloyd)
- In Attendance:** Laura Caiels, Legal Advisor
Mandy Francis, Licensing Manager
Mark Lees, Regulatory Services Manager, Gravesham Borough Council, Gravesham and Medway Shared Licensing Service
Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer

259 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Lloyd.

260 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 29 January 2019 and the record of the Joint Meeting of Committees held on 22 May 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

With reference to minute 756 of the meeting held on 29 January 2019, a Member asked what progress had been made in inviting Transport for London (TfL) to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss Uber related issues. In response, the Regulatory Services Manager, Gravesham Borough Council, Gravesham and Medway Shared Licensing Service said that an invitation had been extended. Although TfL continued to engage with the service on day to day compliance issues, to date there had been no agreement to attend a meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman agreed to write a further letter of invitation to TfL.

261 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

262 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

263 Licensing Compliance and Enforcement Annual Report

Discussion:

The Committee considered the Licensing Compliance and Enforcement Annual Report covering the period April 2018 to March 2019 and incorporating an enforcement report from the Environmental Services Manager.

The Licensing Manager, Gravesham and Medway Shared Licensing Service, advised that the report attached at Appendix A to the Licensing Compliance and Enforcement Annual Report provided a breakdown between compliance, complaints and enforcement. She explained that the reduction in non-statutory compliance checks and inspections at the end of the reporting period was a result of the operational changes that were being put in place at that time to set up the new shared service. However, the service had received no complaints or negative feedback during this time.

The Licensing Manager said that, for the first time the report included an Appendix on Environmental Services Enforcement, prepared by the Council's Environmental Enforcement Manager.

The Committee raised a number of questions arising from the report to which officers gave the following responses:

- Due to the retirement of a member of staff and the end of an apprenticeship, staffing numbers had reduced slightly for a limited period but, following the restructure, all posts in the shared service were occupied. There had been no reduction in the number of permanent staff as a result of the restructure and in their current roles Licensing Officers would be able to carry out administrative and compliance/enforcement duties thereby increasing resilience in the service.
- A structure chart would be circulated to members of the Committee.

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- Moving forward, in line with best practice, enforcement would be more targeted so that it was more effective and resulted in a better service to the customer.
- Taxi Operator checks included the registration of Directors at Companies House; the maintenance of staff records; the provision of training; and compliance with GDPR. In addition, audits were conducted on how customer bookings were recorded.
- Specification checks on new vehicles were always carried out.
- Data showing the fluctuations in the number of new driver applications would be circulated to members of the Committee.
- Officers were exploring more meaningful ways of recording data for future reports. For example, at present a visit by a Licensing Officer might be recorded as three visits if it involved three different checks.
- The cost to the Council of prosecutions depended on the circumstances of each case, for example whether there was an admission of guilt.
- Future reports would include data on bogus charity collections. There was an outstanding action from the last meeting to include an article on this issue in Medway Matters.

Decision:

The Committee:

- (a) noted the Licensing Compliance and Enforcement annual report and the Environmental Enforcement annual report;
- (b) requested that a structure chart for the Licensing Service be circulated to members of the Committee;
- (c) requested that data showing the fluctuations in the number of new driver applications be circulated to members of the Committee;
- (d) requested that future reports include data on bogus charity collections.

264 Update on the Shared Licensing Service between Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council

Discussion:

The Regulatory Services Manager, Gravesham Borough Council, Gravesham and Medway Shared Licensing Services, updated the Committee on the progress of the shared service. He reported that a new staffing structure had been implemented in the spring and had provided opportunities for the team to expand their roles. The migration of data from Medway's to Gravesham's system was well

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underway and increased digitalisation would improve customer service. For example, it was now possible to book and pay for the taxi and private hire driver knowledge test online. The test for both Medway and Gravesham drivers was now successfully operating from Mid Kent College in Gillingham and a module on child sexual exploitation had been added.

As the migration of data progressed, more opportunities for digitalisation would open up, enabling an enhanced customer service, for example the ability to send automated SMS reminders to drivers.

In response to a question from a member of the Committee on the re-structure and savings, it was explained that no staff positions had been lost and further work was on-going to identify efficiency savings to reduce budget pressures and ensure that the service operated on a cost-neutral basis.

It was suggested that more could be done to communicate the positive messages about the new shared service to further improve confidence levels in the service.

Decision:

The Committee noted the update report on the shared Licensing Service between Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council.

Chairman

Date:

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