

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Licensing Committee
Date of Meeting:	14 October 2021
Subject:	Update on the Licensing Function and Progress of the Service Review
Report of:	Interim Environmental Health Manager
Corporate Lead:	Head of Community Services
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

This report updates the Committee on the progress of the service review to deliver an effective and responsive licensing service, both as part of the recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and over a longer term.

Proposals for additional staffing reported to the Licensing Committee on 15 July 2021 have been implemented and the review is now overseen by the Corporate Programme Board to ensure progress is monitored regularly and any issues identified and resolved quickly.

The Business Transformation Team will continue to deliver the online applications project; however, commencement of this work has been deferred until later in the programme and it is proposed that the full review and associated improvements will continue for a further 12 months to ensure all aspects are fully considered and implemented.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the update on the licensing function and progress made in relation to the review of the licensing service.

Reasons for Recommendation:

COVID-19 has had an impact on service delivery and the service requires review to improve efficiency and delivery.

Resource Implications:

Long term resources are being considered as part of the review along with increase in fee generation.

Legal Implications:

None directly arising from this report

Risk Management Implications:

There is a risk that online applications are delayed; however, this is now being overseen via the Corporate Programme Board.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The outcomes of the service review will be reported to the Licensing Committee.

Environmental Implications:

Online applications will have a direct impact on environmental considerations by reducing the use of paper

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 This report looks at the progress of the service review to deliver a substantive and responsive licensing service, both as part of the recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and over the longer term.

2.0 SERVICE REVIEW UPDATE

2.1 The licensing service has continued to be seriously impacted due to COVID-19 by long term sickness which continues to affect one Officer. A further two additional Officers have been recruited using the Contain Outbreak Management fund to assist with the continuing high workload and to address the backlog of animal licensing and caravan site applications.

2.2 A report to the Licensing Committee on 15 July 2021 outlined proposals for additional resources to assist with the implementation of the service review funded via tranche 5 COVID-19 funding from central government. A secondment from a neighbouring authority has been successful, as has recruitment for a 12 month fixed-term contract role. The secondment commenced in August 2021 and will run until the end of October 2021 and the 12 month fixed-term Team Leader starts on 29 November 2021. Both are experienced Licensing Team Leaders with local knowledge.

2.3 Requests for Temporary Events remain high, and we are continuing to see many requests for larger events in the run-up to Christmas as businesses and communities look to recoup lost income and get back to normal following the easing of restrictions. The Licensing team continue to have a significant input to events considered by the Safety Advisory Group.

2.4 The teams' capacity to take enforcement action and carry out premises inspections remains limited as backlogs are being cleared.

2.5 In preparation for online applications, a thorough review of all licensing procedures has commenced including the back office data processing system by the seconded Team Leader and it is planned for this to be completed by the end of October. This will greatly assist in the ability to produce accurate reports and will align with our financial reporting as well as simplifying online applications. Online applications will feed directly into our back office reducing the need for paper applications and reducing administration time. Work has also commenced on our licensing webpages and privacy notices have been uploaded. This will enable us to display our licensing registers.

- 2.6** The Business Transformation Team will continue to deliver the online applications project; however, commencement of this work has been deferred until later in the programme to ensure the service is well prepared for this.
- 2.7** For completeness, as part of the service review, we are also investigating whether or not a shared service with another Council would be beneficial in the longer term.
- 2.8** Progress on the review of the licensing service is now monitored by the Corporate Programme Board to ensure progress is monitored regularly and any issues identified and resolved quickly.

3.0 COVID-19, PUBLIC HEALTH AND LICENSING

- 3.1** COVID-19 remains with us, and the level of infections remains high affecting business and the public. The requirement for enforcement in our licensed premises is paramount to seeking to control public health issues.
- 3.2** Public Health is not included under the Licensing Act 2003 priorities and The Home Office has advised it will not be conducting a review of the licensing objectives at this time.
- 3.3** Therefore, powers to include Public Health as a priority is only contained within The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 which allows for the inclusion of health bodies as responsible authorities meaning they can ask for a review of a licence.
- 3.4** Colleagues from Public Health also sit on the Safety Advisory Group to advise on large events and powers to prevent events going ahead or to close venues where there is a significant risk to public health remain in place until 24 March 2022.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1** None

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1** None

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

- 6.1** The Council's Corporate Plan
The Council's Statement of Licensing Policy

7.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- 7.1** COVID-19 related guidance and the government's Plan A and Plan B

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

- 8.1** Additional temporary resources for licensing enforcement have been sought from the Control Outbreak Management Fund.
- 8.2** Resource implications will be considered as part of the licensing review.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

- 9.1** None

10.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

10.1 Will form part of the licensing review.

11.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

11.1 None

Background Papers: None

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Appendices: None