

LICENSING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
12 SEPTEMBER 2024	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Adrian Chapman, Service Director for Place and Economy	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Alison Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	
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LICENSING SERVICE ANNUAL UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2023 – AUGUST 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Director	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Licensing Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Note the contents of the report, intended to provide Members with an annual update of the Licensing Service and its activities. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to the Licensing Committee for information purposes.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an annual review of the Licensing Service and its activities.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 Annual Service Update

Looking back on the last 12 months, there have been a number of successes for the service.

4.2 The successful adoption of the NAFN (National Anti-Fraud Network) database for checking all new and renewal driver applications against a national register of driver suspensions and revocations. It is mandatory for all local authorities to update the register and to make relevant searches prior to issuing a licence. All searches of the database are date and time stamped, this includes the name of the officer initiating the search and their contact details.

4.3 Recently we were successful in the procurement of a new operating system (Verso) initially for licensing, however once licensing has migrated on to the system it will be rolled out to the rest of regulatory services. The current system is no longer fit for purpose due to its age (25 Years) and

limitations. Verso is an out of the box regulatory services system which can be configured to meet individual council's requirements. It offers a complete end to end solution, with an online customer portal, this will enable a streamlined service, reducing the number manual interventions by officers freeing up time to deal with more complicated tasks.

- 4.4 The introduction of a weekly licensing decisions meeting, this enables officers to present their cases and discuss the proposed outcome at the meeting. This has proved to be very successful as it encourages officers to share the reasoning behind their proposal and to receive feedback from the group. Once the case has been discussed a quorate of officers including the Head of Service, Licensing Manager, Food and Safety Manager, 3 Regulatory Officers will vote on the outcome. Where necessary a legal officer will assist in a support role when required. This offers a transparent process with a group decision being made and documented, making the decision more robust if challenged in magistrate's court.
- 4.5 One of the team is now a qualified mental health first aider and has received training specific to domestic violence. Staff member has also completed a peer support worker course with skills that have been transferred into her current role supporting the team, the wider department and our service users.
- 4.6 In addition to the above, the Licensing Service is responsible for accepting and processing a wide range of applications for licensable activities each year with the below demonstrating just some of the key areas and volumes from the last 12 months:
- Over 599 Temporary Event Notices
 - 123 Personal Licences
 - Over 186 transfers and DPS variations
 - 44 new premises licences
 - 1369 taxi and private vehicle licences
 - 600 taxi and private hire drivers
 - Refused 33 driver applications
 - Revoked 14 driver licences
 - Suspended 5 driver licences
- 4.7 We have introduced a non-appointment drop-in service on Thursday mornings where applicants can come along and meet with an officer face to face to discuss applications or gain support with any licensing issue they may have. This is a sit and wait service where drivers are seen in the order of their arrival. Although drivers are asked to wait in reception, an officer will collect them and take to the drop-in area away from reception to ensure confidentiality. This service has been in operation since November 2022, and on average we assist 20 drivers and other applicants per drop-in service. Since the introduction of this service, we have seen and supported over 1,800 applicants.
- 4.8 The Licensing Service has operated successfully under extreme pressure due to increased service demands with and the introduction of additional mandatory checks that must be carried out prior to the issuing of a licence. We have recently recruited two new licensing officers, these are to fill a vacancy which has been problematic to recruit to successfully, and the other to fill an additional post funded by Rutland County Council due to the increased demand on the Rutland licensing service.
- 4.9 The recent revocation of the premises licence for Bar 42 on Broadway is an example of the work that officers undertake. The review was served due to severe concerns for public safety, the concerns were so bad that a Summary Review was served meaning that the Licensing Act 2003 Sub Committee were required to make an interim decision to suspend the premises licence immediately whilst the review application underwent its 28-day consultation.

This was the first time a summary review has been served in 11 years. The came despite several interventions by the Head of Service, Regulatory Officers & Police Licensing Officers to engage with the licence holders to mitigate rising criminal incidents at the premises. PCC & Police Licensing Officers worked with the licence holders after a rise in the number and severity of

incidents were reported. The licence holders put in place several of the measures advised but failed to implement them all. This is believed to be a factor in the recent serious incidents taking place at the premises, which includes a vicious assault which saw the victim admitted to hospital with a bleed on the brain, and an alleged rape of a young female.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 N/A this report is for information purposes only.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 No consultation required; report is for information purposes only.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 No anticipated outcomes: report is for information purposes only.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 No recommendations made: report is for information purposes only.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 No alternative options considered: report is for information purposes only.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications as the report is for information purposes only.

Legal Implications

10.2 There are no legal implications as the report is for information purposes only.

Equalities Implications

10.3 There are no equality implications as the report is for information purposes only.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 There were no background documents used to prepare this report.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 There are no appendices.

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