
Licensing and Protection Panel

Report of the meeting held on 24th March 2015.

Matters for Information

12. SERVICE PLAN FOR FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT 2015/16

The Panel has considered the content of the draft Service Plan for Food Law Enforcement for 2015/16. The Plan has been developed to comply with the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and incorporates the aims and objectives of the service, the resources available and a review of work undertaken during the previous year. The Plan has been written earlier than in previous years with the intention that it should be approved by Council at the start of the operational year.

Members' attention has been drawn to the developments that are planned for the service in 2015-16, which are in addition to the programmed and reactive work. In doing so, Members have sought clarification and have asked questions on a number of these proposed activities.

The Panel's attention has also been drawn to the resources that are available to deliver the 2015/16 Plan and Members have noted that there is a reduction in budgetary provision of 4.85% on the previous financial year. Although it is anticipated that these will be sufficient to meet the requirements of the service, in the event of a complex investigation or legal case, or the introduction of central sampling charges, additional funds may need to be sought.

Having noted that the draft Plan was based upon the service remaining fully staffed and that the service plan would be under-resourced if staffing levels are not maintained, Members have expressed concerns at the failure to recruit to an existing vacancy within the Commercial Team. Members are of the opinion that this will have an impact on the delivery of the Plan for 2015/16 and that the Panel should not endorse the Plan whilst the resourcing issues were still uncertain. Having noted that there is no statutory timescale for the approval of the Plan and that by the date of their next meeting it would be possible to provide an update on the recruitment situation, the Panel has agreed that consideration of the Service Plan should be deferred to their next meeting in June 2015.

In terms of Members' involvement with the Service Plan, concerns have been expressed that the Panel only has an opportunity to consider the Plan on an annual basis. Members are of the opinion that there should be a regular role for Members of the Panel during the course of the year to monitor performance against predicted activity levels and to review resourcing issues. Members have been informed that work is currently being undertaken to streamline the approval process for the Plan and that as part of which consideration could be given to subjecting the Plan to further scrutiny.

13. GUIDELINES RELATING TO THE RELEVANCE AND TREATMENT OF CONVICTIONS – HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

Subject to the inclusion of 'perjury' and 'perversion of the course of justice' to the list of dishonesty offences, the Panel has approved a set of revised guidelines relating to the relevance and treatment of convictions for hackney carriage and private hire drivers. The guidelines which are designed to ensure consistency in practice have been revised to reflect recent legislative changes and to provide greater clarity on the treatment of convictions received by existing drivers.

14. LICENSING AND PROTECTION APPLICATIONS SUB-GROUP

The Panel has noted the details of the six meetings of the Applications Sub-Group which has taken place between 11th November and 10th March 2015.

J W Davies
Chairman