

# Regulatory Committee

**1.15pm, Monday, 8 January 2018**

## **Licensing Customer Survey 2017**

<b>Item number</b>	6.3
<b>Report number</b>	
<b>Executive/routine</b>	Executive
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Council Commitments</b>	

### **Executive Summary**

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Placing customers at the heart of the service and increasing customer satisfaction are key priorities for the Licensing Service. In order to understand service users' views, and assess levels of customer satisfaction, customer research is carried out on an annual basis.

A short telephone customer survey is used to assess levels of satisfaction and an action plan developed to address any issues raised. A summary of the feedback is included in appendix 1. The action plan developed following the 2015 survey is attached (appendix 2) and this has been used to drive further improvement of the service and also encapsulates 2016 results.

Demand for the service continues to rise, in particular a 13% increase in Temporary Licence applications in comparison to last year and 4% increase in all other applications.

## Licensing Customer Survey 2017

### 1. Recommendations

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It is recommended that Committee:

- 1.1 notes this report and approves the action plan at Appendix 2; and
- 1.2 agrees to receive a further report in 12 months with an update on progress against the actions agreed and details of the 2018 survey.

### 2. Background

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- 2.1 The City of Edinburgh Council has statutory responsibilities to license certain businesses and activities, in order to ensure that proper standards are met and that the general public interest and public safety are protected. The Licensing Service receives approximately 23,000 licence applications each year and the volume of applications is increasing year on year.
- 2.2 This report outlines the results of the 2017 survey, in which the majority of areas surveyed showed slightly lower scores when compared with the 2016 research ([21 November 2016](#)).
- 2.3 One of the main themes highlighted from the feedback was a desire to ensure that enforcement is robust.
- 2.4 The online services corporate project has been delayed, and as a result the anticipated continued improvement of the Licensing customer service experience has been delayed. It is anticipated that the benefits will be delivered in line with the corporate project.
- 2.5 The licensing customer survey covers Taxi, Private Hire Car, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and Civic Licensing.
- 2.6 In 2017 the Service dealt with increased numbers of applications and responsibilities, due to changes in both legal process and Council transformation. It has been a challenge to deliver the anticipated continued improvements, but the service has adapted, recruited and streamlined services. The service anticipates the benefits will be felt this coming year when the corporate ICT programme has delivered the agreed outcomes.

### 3. Main report

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#### Customer Survey Methodology

- 3.1 The customer research is conducted by a telephone survey designed to assess customer satisfaction across a range of measures, and is carried out by an independent research company on an annual basis. Customers are randomly selected from a database of customers who have applied for a licence within the previous 18 months. Responses are then weighted by function (Taxi, Private Hire Car, HMO and Civic Licences) to reflect actual service volumes. The 2017 survey fieldwork was conducted between 22 May and 14 June 2017. A summary of the survey results is attached at appendix 1.

#### 2017 Survey

- 3.2 2017 has continued the period of change for the service and its customers. There have also been several changes in relevant policy and legislation since the last survey was carried out.
- 3.3 Amongst the pressures, the introduction of new statutory duties in relation to the Immigration Act 2016 commenced on 1 December 2016. The detailed preparation, system and process redesign required to implement the new statutory requirements had a significant impact on workload and affected performance. Overall this has been successfully introduced.
- 3.4 The Action Plan which was last agreed by the Committee on [21 November 2016](#) has driven positive changes to service delivery, and has continued to focus on customer service. These outcomes include improved timescales for processing applications and improved customer communication. The action plan is included in appendix 2 for information.
- 3.5 The Council agreed increases for the majority of licensing application fees with effect from April 2017. With respect to HMOs, the fee structure was revised with a cost reduction for the majority of licence holders.

#### Survey Results

- 3.6 On a scale of one to 10, overall customer satisfaction with the service has slightly decreased from 7.3 in 2016 to 6.85 in 2017, but is still positive.
- 3.7 Overall satisfaction with the service has also shown a slight decrease (less than 10%) from the previous year, with the exception of satisfaction with 'civic' licences, which has slightly increased.
- 3.8 The most notable decreases were seen with respect to satisfaction with licence processing times (decrease from 6.1 to 5.4) and 'being kept up to date with the progress of the application' (6.2 to 5.4).
- 3.9 Although there was a slight decline in the figures, feedback remains encouraging as customers were fully supportive of online services in most areas, when combined with Licensing Duty Officers being available to answer queries. A highlighted area

was the desire to ensure that enforcement is robust and this has been incorporated into the action plan for this year.

### **Action Plan and Service Improvements**

- 3.10 The action plan developed to address issues raised in previous surveys has been updated to reflect changes made. The outstanding actions relating to ICT within the plan are currently progressing in line with the implementation of the corporate ICT plan however the needs of the service are clearly bespoke and require appropriate development..
- 3.11 Tasks completed to date in 2017 can be summarised as follows:
- 3.11.1 Introduction of three year licences in HMOs;
  - 3.11.2 Extensive consultation with stakeholders and partners over policy changes - following the realignment of responsibilities from national to local level with respect to the responsibility for checking immigration status;
  - 3.11.3 Accreditation from City and Guilds and British Institute of Innkeepers for our Training School ahead of the commencement of Taxi and Private Hire Training in April 2018; and
  - 3.11.4 Realignment of Licensing responsibilities to merge the Licensing and Inspection services and the creation of a standalone Licensing Enforcement team that is solely focused on enforcement. This is a move away from the previous structures where the teams were multi-tasked which led to an environment conducive to silo working.
- 3.12 Performance indicators previously introduced for key areas of the Licensing Service are as follows:
- Applications complete within 72 days – Target 90%;
  - Consultation requests circulated within 7 days – Target 95%.
- 3.14 Since they were introduced, performance against these targets has improved overall. This year the number of staff vacancies has had an impact on the service. A report on performance is included as a separate item on this agenda.

### **Development of Customer Survey**

- 3.15 Licence types surveyed were expanded in 2016 to include Taxi, Private Hire Car, HMO and Civic Licences. This allowed the service to gain a better understanding of the needs and views of each of these groups, and allowed targeted service improvement opportunities to be developed.
- 3.16 The 'value for money' element has not formed part of the survey since 2015. The Committee undertook a full fee review and implemented significant change in early 2017. The fee structure incorporated reduced fees in HMO and Taxi and Private Hire Car licences with mixed feedback. Generally HMO customers were happy with the three year licence fee being the same as the one year fee. Taxi and Private Hire

Car feedback suggested the fee reduction has increased the number of applications, which has led to greater competition in the marketplace. It is believed that complex market changes are in fact responsible for the increase in PHC licence applications.

- 3.17 A new question added in 2017 showed that just over half of our customers would prefer to submit and receive documentation electronically. This number is much higher if Taxi and Private Hire Car licences are excluded, as over 90% of these applicants do not wish to submit electronically. The service will be working with the Council's Channel Shift project team to progress electronic submission for services other than Taxi and Private Hire Car licenses over the coming months.
- 3.18 Another new question added in 2017 showed that 44% of customers would prefer to make payment electronically, while 33% prefer to make payment in person. It would be preferable for customers to have access to Licensing services electronically and the service is part of the corporate project to introduce this functionality in its first phase.
- 3.19 For the first time, customers were asked to comment on their perception of whether they were treated fairly and the results demonstrate that this is the case, with scores in excess of eight out of 10. The service aims to treat all customers in a fair and equitable manner, which is reflected in this strong positive result.

### **Next Steps**

- 3.20 The licensing service workload continues to increase, with the introduction of additional licence requirements as legislation including the Air Weapons and the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 is gradually implemented by the Scottish Government. These will include the introduction of immigration checks across further licence types, criminal convictions checks, and changes to the 1982 Act itself.
- 3.21 The wider Council structure continues to change, with structures adapting to future business needs, which the service is keen to embrace. The support of all Council services is essential for the success of a streamlined Licensing Service, not only to respond to customer demand but also to provide a proactive service. The corporate project to deliver 'Channel Shift' will positively affect licensing, with a move to mainly electronic licence applications. This will help the service to continue to improve and are a priority for the department.
- 3.22 The service will seek to continue to improve how it engages with customers, and the Customer Survey will be repeated in 2018 to assess progress at that time.
- 3.23 The Regulatory Committee Policy work plan is addressing emerging issues, and where possible simplifying and improving local licensing conditions.

#### **4. Measures of success**

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- 4.1 The report highlights areas for continuous improvement, and on areas which have shown improvements since last year's research was carried out and reported on. Improvements will be shown in future years' surveys and the benefits from service improvements will be realised.

#### **5. Financial impact**

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- 5.1 The cost of the research is approximately £16,000 per annum. This is met from the income generated from licence fees.

#### **6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact**

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- 6.1 The agreed reports and performance measures improve the governance of the Licensing Service, they reduce risk and improve the transparency of Service performance.

#### **7. Equalities impact**

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- 7.1 The contents and recommendations neither contribute to, nor detract from, the delivery of the three Public Sector Equality Duties
- 7.2 The contents and recommendations described in the report do not deliver any outcomes relating to the ten areas of rights, nor do they enhance or infringe them.

#### **8. Sustainability impact**

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- 8.1 There is no environmental impact arising from the contents of this report.

#### **9. Consultation and engagement**

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- 9.1 Not applicable.

#### **10. Background reading/external references**

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- [Licensing Customer Survey 2016 – November 2016](#)
- [Licensing Customer Survey 2015 – February 2016](#)
- [Licensing Customer Survey 2014 – November 2014](#)

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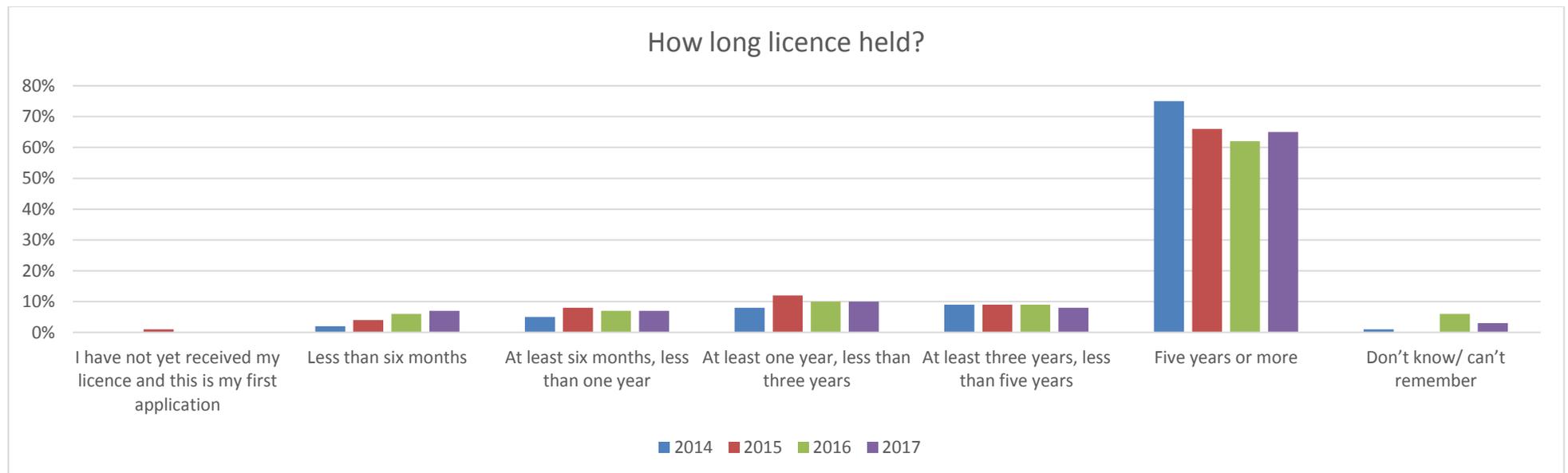
## **11. Appendices**

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- 11.1 Summary results (and comparison where possible) of 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 surveys
- 11.2 Licensing Action Plan and Workstreams – updated September 2017

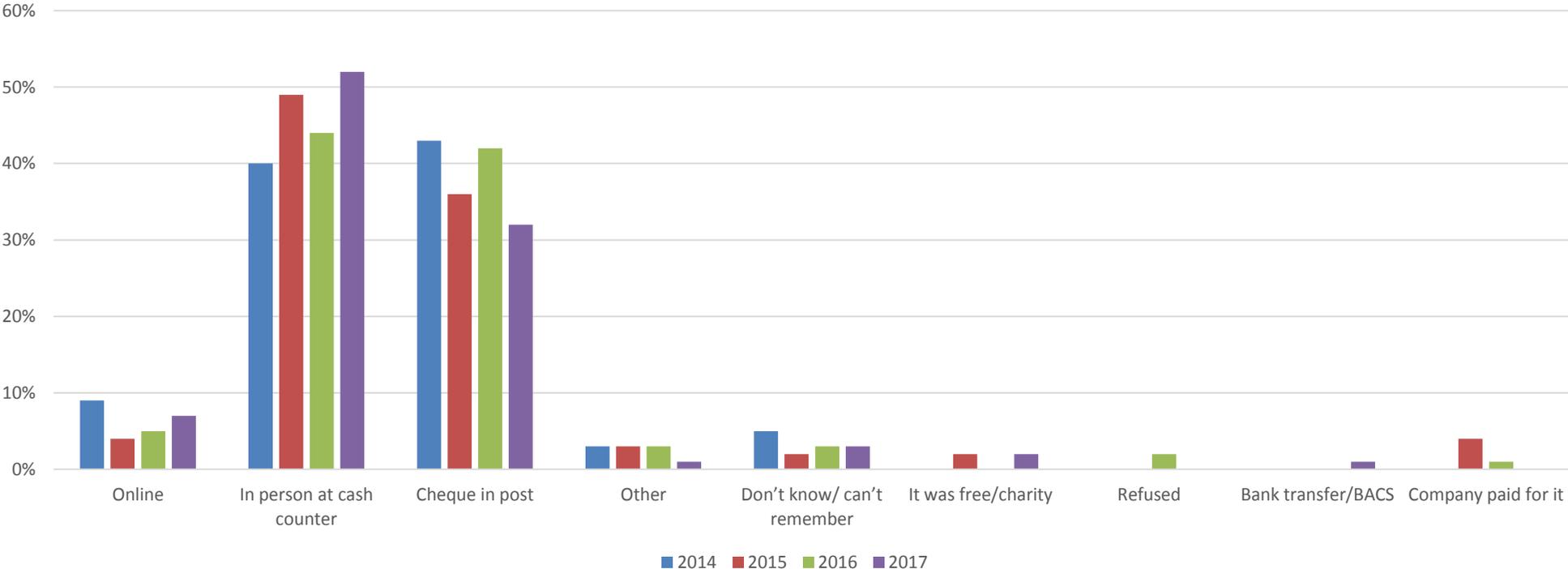
## Appendix 1

Q2 How long have you been/were you a licence holder in Edinburgh?				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1329</b>	<b>1437</b>	<b>1412</b>	<b>1124</b>
I have not yet received my licence and this is my first application	0%	1%	0	0
Less than six months	2%	4%	6%	7%
At least six months, less than one year	5%	8%	7%	7%
At least one year, less than three years	8%	12%	10%	10%
At least three years, less than five years	9%	9%	9%	8%
Five years or more	75%	66%	62%	65%
Don't know/ can't remember	1%	0%	6%	3%



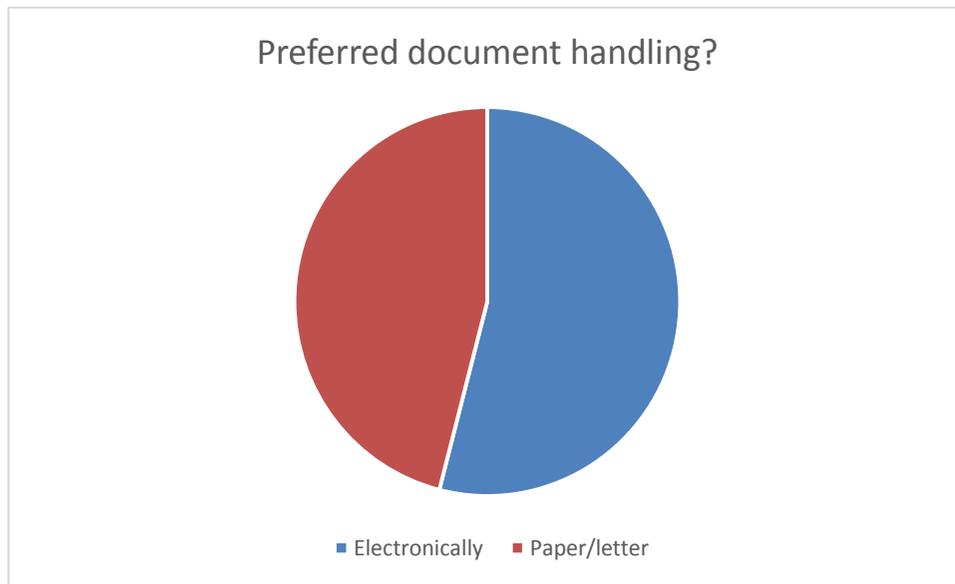
How did you pay for your (most recent) licence? (question not asked in 2013)				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1329</b>	<b>1437</b>	<b>1412</b>	<b>1124</b>
Online	9%	4%	5%	7%
In person at cash counter	40%	49%	44%	52%
Cheque in post	43%	36%	42%	32%
Other	3%	3%	3%	1%
Don't know/ can't remember	5%	2%	3%	3%
It was free/charity	-	2%	0%	2%
Refused	-	-	2%	-
Bank transfer/BACS				1%
Company paid for it	-	4%	1%	-

### How paid?



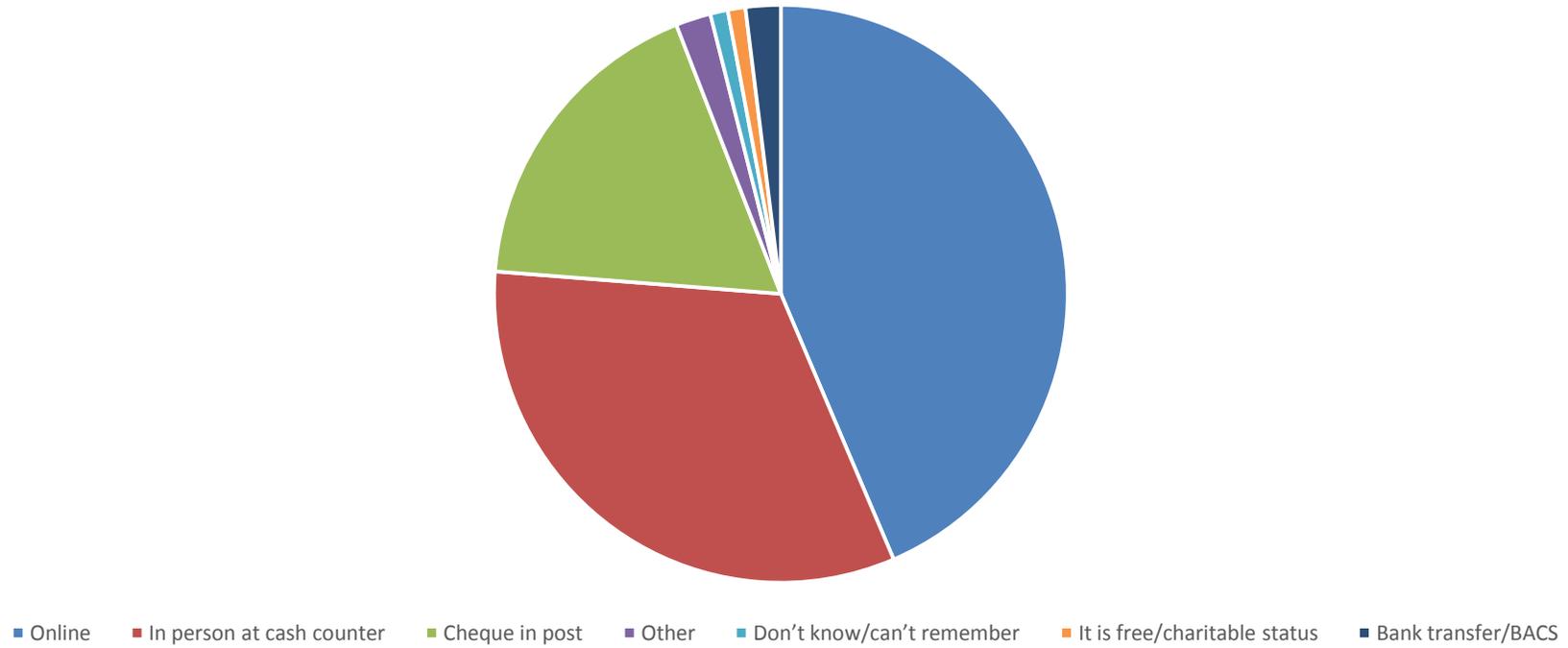
**How would you prefer to submit and receive your documentation? (new question in 2017)**

Unweighted Base: n=1124	2017
Electronically	54%
Paper/letter	46%

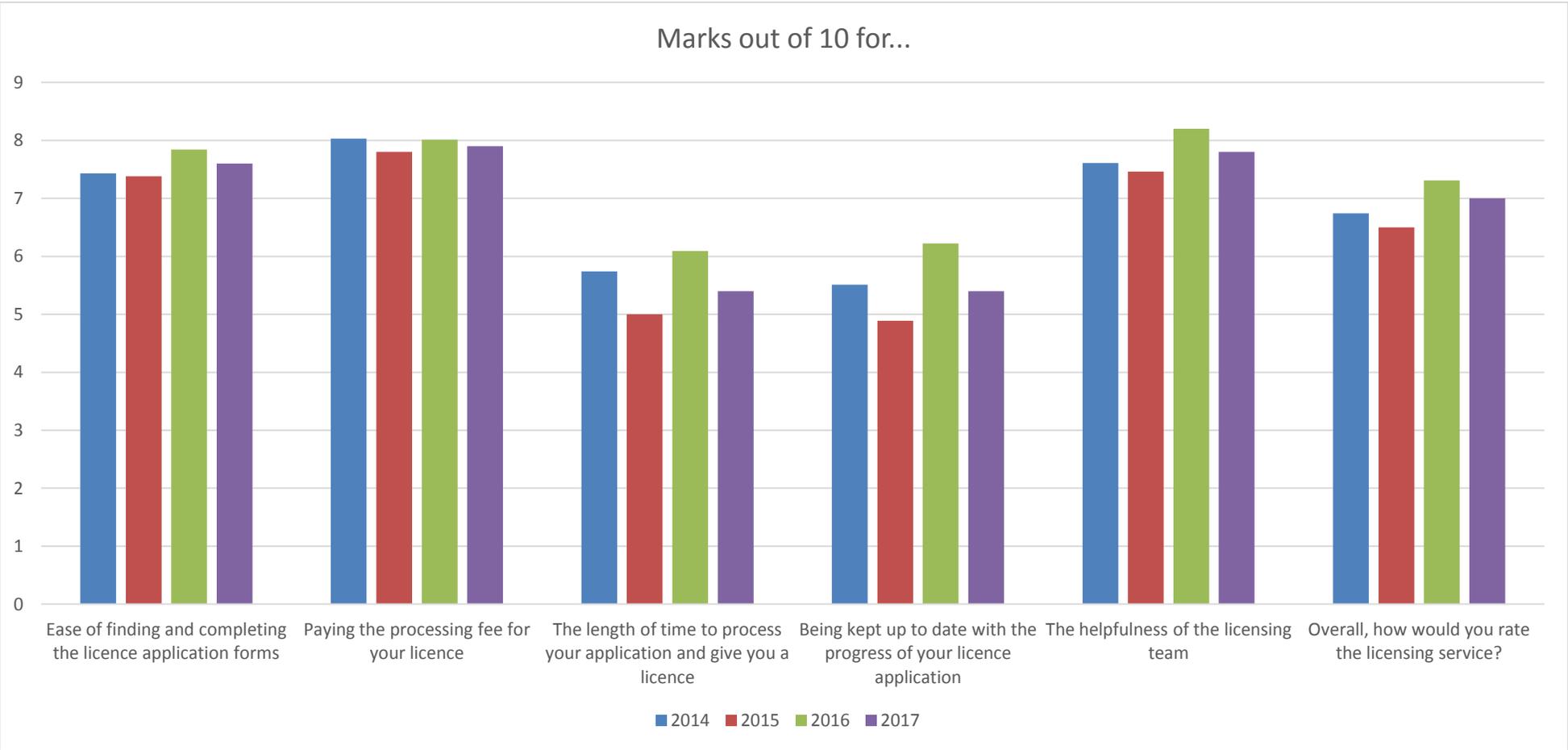


<b>How would you prefer to make your payment? (new question in 2017)</b>	
<b>Unweighted Base: n=1124</b>	<b>2017</b>
Online	44%
In person at cash counter	33%
Cheque in post	18%
Other	2%
Don't know/can't remember	1%
It is free/charitable status	1%
Bank transfer/BACS	2%
Company pays for it	-

Preferred payment method

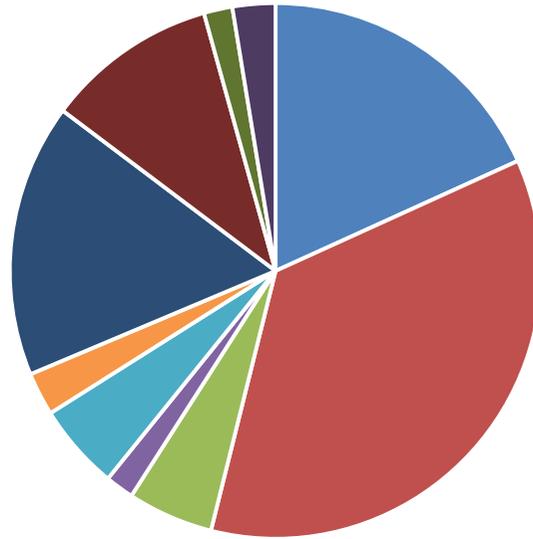


Rate the following aspects of the Licensing Service (score out of 10, where 1 is 'poor' and 10 is excellent)				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Ease of finding and completing the licence application forms	7.43	7.38	7.84	7.6
Paying the processing fee for your licence	8.03	7.80	8.01	7.9
The length of time to process your application and give you a licence	5.74	5.00	6.09	5.4
Being kept up to date with the progress of your licence application	5.51	4.89	6.22	5.4
The helpfulness of the licensing team	7.61	7.46	8.2	7.8
Overall, how would you rate the licensing service?	6.74	6.50	7.31	7.0



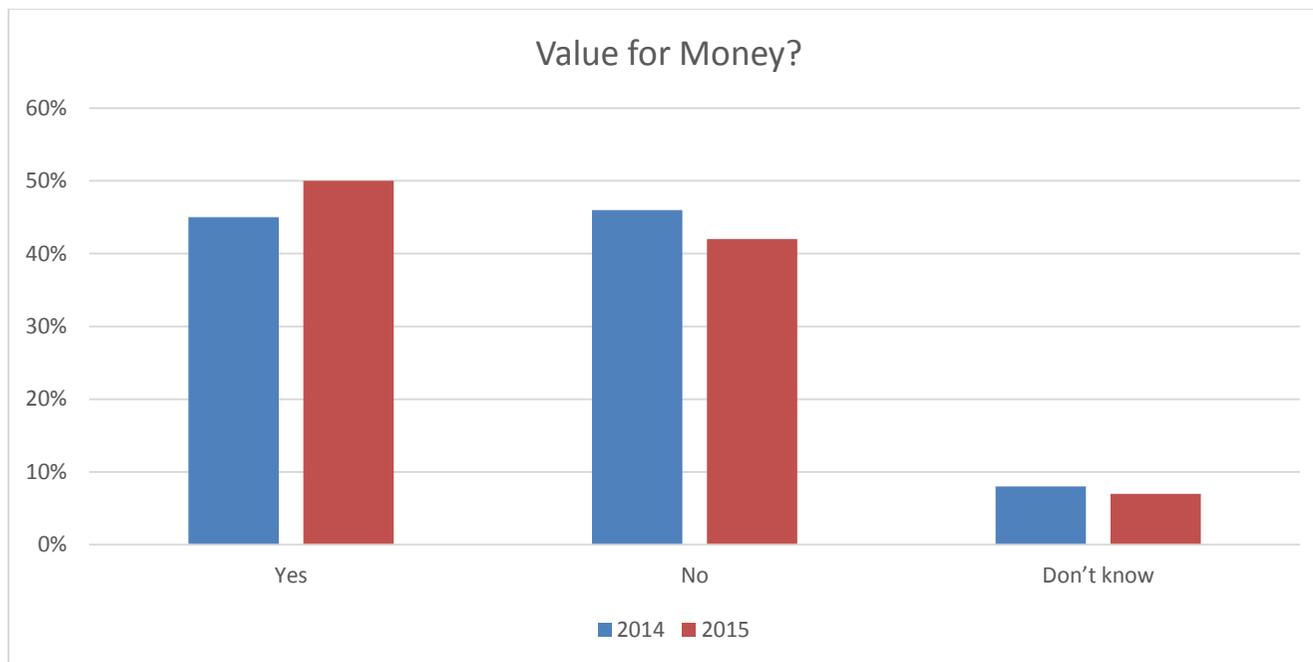
<b>What do you think the purpose of licensing is? (asked in 2016 only)</b>	
<b>Unweighted Base: n=1412</b>	<b>2016</b>
Benefit the public/ keep the public safe	21%
To have a regulated service/ make sure rules are adhered to	41%
I just need it for work	6%
To ensure people are fit and able for the job	2%
A way of getting the Council money/ creates jobs	6%
So I can run events/ trade/ sell alcohol	3%
To prevent rogue landlords/ properties are of a good standard/ safe	19%
To monitor who works in the industry	12%
Don't know	2%
Other	3%

### Purpose of Licensing



- Benefit the public/ keep the public safe
- I just need it for work
- A way of getting the Council money/ creates jobs
- To prevent rogue landlords/ properties are of a good standard/ safe
- Don't know
- To have a regulated service/ make sure rules are adhered to
- To ensure people are fit and able for the job
- So I can run events/ trade/ sell alcohol
- To monitor who works in the industry
- Other

Do you feel that the licensing service provides value for money?		
	2014	2015
Yes	45%	50%
No	46%	42%
Don't know	8%	7%



**How fairly do you think the licensing service treats its customers? (new question in 2017) (score out of 10, where 1 is 'poor' and 10 is excellent)**

Unweighted Base: n=1124

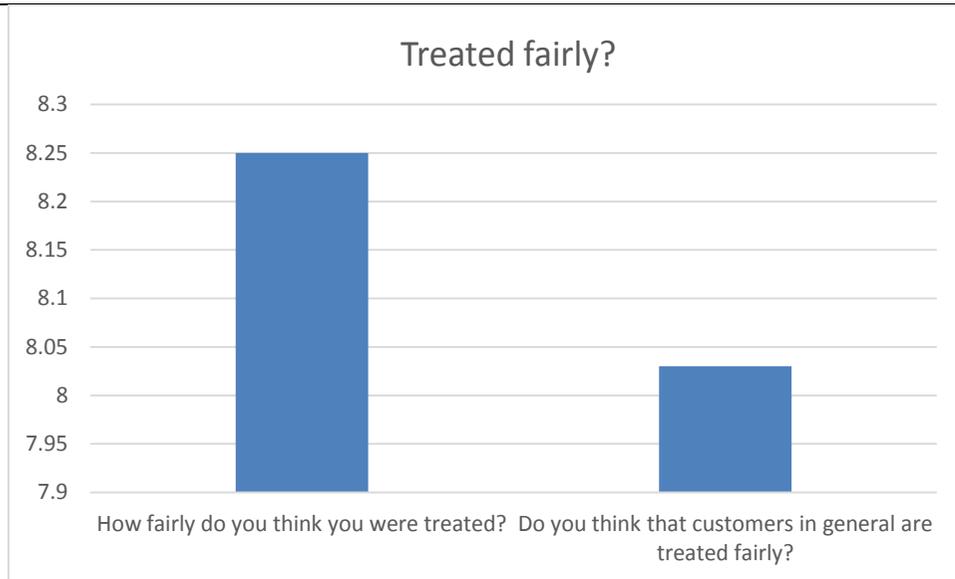
2017

How fairly do you think you were treated?

8.25

Do you think that customers in general are treated fairly?

8.03



Do you have any suggestions for how the licensing service can be improved?				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Unweighted base</b>	<b>1431</b>	<b>1458</b>	<b>1437</b>	<b>1421</b>
Fee reduction/ less expensive	10%	6%	14%	7%
Online payment method/ by post/ BACs	2%	3%	8%	7%
Process application quicker	15%	14%	25%	16%
Inform us of any changes/ send emails/ more feedback on progress	10%	20%	19%	13%
Improved online services	5%	10%	11%	13%
Extend licence period	5%	9%	9%	7%
Cut down regulations/ rules	9%	17%	7%	5%
Better parking facilities in city centre	2%	2%	1%	2%
Improved staff/ more helpful staff	2%	4%	13%	7%
No/ happy with service	43%	38%	22%	30%
Don't know	3%	1%	1%	1%
Other	3%	2%	3%	5%
*A reminder service	-	-	2%	3%
*Need to be stricter e.g. identify those not paying for a licence/ vet licence applicants	-	-	3%	3%
*Improve the office e.g. changing desk location, separate licence desk	-	-	4%	3%

*Improve the application form	-	-	3%	5%
*Remove/ simplify the licence	-	-	1%	3%
*Renewals made easier	-	-	1%	3%

## Appendix 2

### Licensing Action Plan – items complete

Workstream	Remit	Method	Benefit to Customer	Estimated completion date	Actual completion date
<b>Improved Communications with Customers</b>					
<b>ICT Improvements External Customers</b>	Introduce more efficient telephone system.	Adopt Solidus system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calls answered more quickly</li> <li>• Staff have access to call history improving ability to assist customers</li> <li>• Improved customer experience</li> <li>• Assist with staff training to increase call handling skills</li> <li>• Greater transparency re customer initiated contacts</li> <li>• System provides average no. calls – highest numbers received over summer period</li> </ul>	September 2016	September 2016  Complete
	Improve access to licence applications register.	Publish registers online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased accessibility to the service</li> <li>• Greater transparency</li> <li>• Access to real time information</li> </ul>	On hold until Corporate project is complete.	Summer 2018
<b>Communications with Customers</b>	Update web pages.	Add 'You Said We Did'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater understanding of how service is developing to meet needs of service users</li> <li>• Greater transparency</li> <li>• Inclusive by nature</li> </ul>	Ongoing commitment	

	Develop customer survey to allow feedback from specific user groups.	Amend Customer Survey to target up to six different types of licence holder rather than generic survey to all licence types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater understanding of customer requirements</li> <li>• Inclusive approach leading to customers feeling valued</li> </ul>	April 2016	Ongoing annual survey
<b>Consultation</b>	Improve stakeholder engagement.	<p>Introduce regular licence-specific consultation and feedback per application and/or legal representative</p> <p>Introduce quarterly meetings with trade groups</p> <p>Provide Licensing Service at Customer Hubs/Libraries to allow customers to utilise local based services to access licensing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers have ability to influence development of policy and practice</li> <li>• Customers provided with regular feedback</li> <li>• Improved access to licensing service</li> <li>• Improved customer experience</li> <li>• Greater transparency</li> </ul>	June 2017	June 2017
<b>Improve Processing Performance</b>					
<b>Improved coordination across Council Service Areas</b>	Review and streamline processes across Council service areas.	<p>Remove duplication amongst Licensing consultees</p> <p>Introduction of APP has allowed all consultees access to Licensing records</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of one stop shop improving customer experience</li> <li>• Service providers have improved access to records and have greater ability to address customer concerns</li> </ul>	Ongoing - requires ICT solution being finalised	

		Merging customer records to create shared record  Provision of performance reports for consultees			
	Link telephone system to electronic document management system.	Adapt system to integrate with ICT system to allow records to be automatically updated, filed and numbered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved quality of service</li> <li>• Value for money</li> <li>• Speed up service provision</li> </ul>	On hold until Corporate project is resolved and complete	
<b>Feedback to Customers</b>					
<b>Improved customer feedback</b>	Increase customer satisfaction levels.	Regular consultation, working groups, surveys and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers have ability to influence development of policy and practice</li> <li>• Customers provided with regular feedback</li> <li>• Improved access to licensing service</li> </ul>	August 2018	Annual reports
	Staff providing feedback when complete application received		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved customer experience</li> <li>• Improved quality of service</li> <li>• Value for money</li> </ul>	Part of daily application process	December 2016
<b>Move to 3 year licence periods from 1 year</b>	Identify whether periods can be extended for certain licence types.	Policy work already started with view to increasing licence types for particular licence applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved quality of service</li> <li>• Value for money</li> <li>• Reduction in number of applications that require to be submitted</li> <li>• Greater transparency and ability to plan ahead</li> </ul>	June 2016	Commenced 1 June 2017

		Further work required to improve the consultation and feedback experience for people affected by temporary licences.			
<b>Discount Licence Fees for small Community groups</b>	Increase opportunities for community groups		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased support for community groups</li> <li>Improved access to Licensing Service</li> </ul>	April 2015	April 2015
<b>Helpfulness</b>					
<b>Training of frontline staff</b>	Staff refreshed in core customer care skills, call handling and licensing knowledge	Increased staff training Staff trained across range of licence types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are able to deliver improved quality of service</li> <li>Value for money</li> <li>Improved customer experience</li> </ul>	September & November 2016	September 2016
	All Staff appointed to Grade 6 role required to undertake paralegal in Licensing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are able to deliver improved quality of service</li> <li>Improved customer experience</li> </ul>	May 2015 September 2015 March 2016	All complete March 2016

## Ongoing

<b>Communications with Customers</b>	Review accessibility of existing communications.	Review language and update letters etc to Plain English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to information in user friendly format</li> <li>Improved customer experience</li> <li>Inclusive experience to facilitate confidence in service provision</li> </ul>	March 2016	September 2016
	Update web pages.	Add 'You Said We Did'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater understanding of how service is developing to meet needs of service users</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Summer 2018

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater transparency</li> <li>• Inclusive by nature</li> </ul>		
<b>Improved coordination across Council Service Areas</b>	Review and streamline processes across Council service areas.	Provision of performance reports for consultees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of one stop shop improving customer experience</li> <li>• Service providers have improved access to records and have greater ability to address customer concerns</li> </ul>	Ongoing - requires ICT solution being finalised	
<b>Improved customer feedback</b>	Increase customer satisfaction levels.	Regular consultation, working groups, surveys and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers have ability to influence development of policy and practice</li> <li>• Customers provided with regular feedback</li> <li>• Improved access to licensing service</li> </ul>	August 2018	2015-16 customer satisfaction increased, but decreased for 2016 - 2017

### ICT dependent

<b>Improved Communications with Customers</b>					
<b>ICT Improvements External Customers</b>	Introduce online applications. Introduce Electronic Document Management and improve online payment system.	Coordinate with corporate CGI plan and data protection team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased accessibility to the service</li> <li>• Value for money</li> <li>• Direct payment system</li> <li>• Improved payment options</li> </ul> Faster service, automated updates & quicker overall process	Corporate project is ongoing. Licensing is included in stage 1 of the project	
	Improve access to licence applications register.	Publish registers online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased accessibility to the service</li> <li>• Greater transparency</li> <li>• Access to real time information</li> </ul>	On hold until Corporate project above is complete.	
<b>ICT Improvements External Internal Customers</b>	Mobile technology for enforcement staff in the field.	Source and procure a device compatible with current ICT system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassurance for licence applicants and members of the public.</li> <li>• Staff have direct access to licence</li> </ul>	On hold until Corporate ICT project above is	

			<p>information and are able to provide real time guidance and/or assistance</p> <p>Greater staff efficiencies leading to increased time available for proactive work</p>	complete	
<b>Communications with Customers</b>	Increase use of social media.	Digital development proposal to be drafted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service accessible by greater audience</li> <li>• Greater transparency</li> <li>• Improved customer experience</li> </ul>	This is to become part of the Council's social media rather than a standalone Licensing service	September 2017
<b>Improved coordination across Council Service Areas</b>	Review and streamline processes across Council service areas.	Provision of performance reports for consultees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of one stop shop improving customer experience</li> <li>• Service providers have improved access to records and have greater ability to address customer concerns</li> </ul>	Ongoing and dependent on outcome of ICT solution being finalised	