

Briefing Notes

Committee name: Licensing Committee

Date: 24 June 2020

Responsible officer: Licensing Team Leader

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

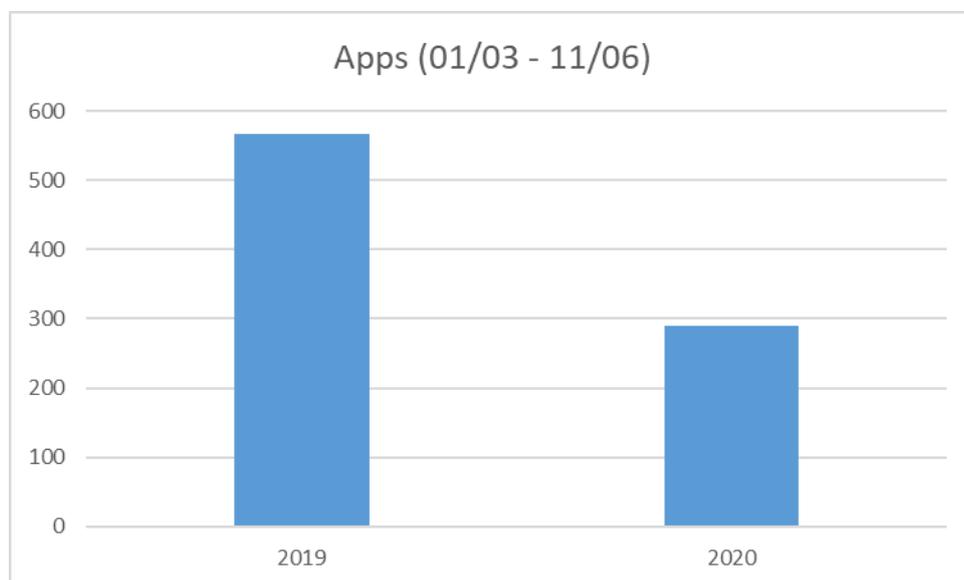
If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the Officer indicated.

Licensing response to Covid-19

This briefing note is to update Members of the Licensing Committee on the licensing section's operational response to the implications of the pandemic.

Operational Implications

Since the Government's lockdown and restrictions regulations were implemented in March, the licensing section saw an immediate downturn in licensing activity. Many of the businesses impacted were licensed such as bars, clubs, restaurants, street traders, markets etc.



This coupled with the closure of the Municipal Offices and officers exclusively working from home meant that very quick service delivery changes had to be implemented to ensure we were able to continue delivering the service remotely.

Thanks to the hard work of licensing officers, particularly Jason Kirkwood, Freya Gill and Phil Bowen, the licensing section was able to adopt very quickly and the disruption to service delivery was minimal.

A number of service areas needed to be changed and some halted all together.

Vehicle MOTs	<p>The requirement was temporarily suspended in line with Government advice and in response to approved testing stations closing.</p> <p>The requirement has been re-instated but a small number of vehicles still need to provide up to date MOT certificates by the deadline of 30 June.</p>
Driver medical	<p>The requirement was temporarily suspended in response to GP practices not being able to carry out medical check-ups.</p> <p>The requirement has now been re-instated but a small number of driver still need to provide up to date medical certificates by the deadline of 30 June.</p>
New taxi/PH driver applications	<p>New taxi and PH driver applications remain suspended because officers cannot verify documents safety and are unable to do mandatory driver training.</p>
Licensing enforcement	<p>The licensing enforcement officer was seconded to the cemetery and cremation service and the virtual call centre to support vulnerable people.</p> <p>The downturn in licensing activity also impacted on the need for enforcement resource. However, Sarah will shortly be brought back as we prepare for more licensed venues opening in July.</p>

Policy Changes

The following licensing policy changes were approved:

- Urgent Licensing Policy Changes: <https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1352>
- To reject the Cheltenham Taxi Drivers Association's request that, in light of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the licensed trade, the implementation date of the adopted wheelchair accessible (WAV) policy for hackney carriages be reviewed: <https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1362>
- Temporary changes to Street Scene Licensing Policy: **TBC**

Recovery Plan

As the service is moving from response to recovery, a licensing and night-time economy recovery plan has been developed to support the corporate recovery strategy.

A copy of the licensing recovery plan is attached at Appendix 1 of this briefing note. The plan and approach has been approved by the Cabinet Member for Development & Safety.

Members can find more information on the licensing recovery work on the council's website:
<http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/licensed-premises-recovery>.

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