

# **Report to Licensing Review Task and Finish Panel**

**Date of meeting: 4 March 2013**

**Subject: Licence Committee Options**

**Officer contact for further information: Assistant to the Chief Executive (on behalf of Management Board)**

**Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry**



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## **Decisions Required:**

**That consideration be given to the concerns being expressed by Management Board concerning the OS licensing review.**

## **Report:**

1. As part of the normal agenda planning arrangements for Overview & Scrutiny, the Management Board (chaired by Glen Chipp, Chief Executive) was asked to review the draft report of this Panel which is reproduced elsewhere in this agenda. The report was discussed at the Management Board meeting on 20 February 2013 and it was decided to seek agreement with the Chairman of the Panel to submit a brief report on the review.

2. Officers met with the Chairman on 25 February and she agreed that such a paper might assist members in deciding the next steps on the review.

## **Management Board Comments**

3. Management Board was conscious that the review had not been finalised and that a draft report had been prepared based on the Panel's discussions so far. The draft report has been published as intended without any amendments by Management Board and the Panel is therefore asked to treat the following comments as further evidence/consultation.

4. Management Board's concerns are summarised as follows:

(a) That the present licensing arrangements at member and officer levels appear to be working satisfactorily;

(b) That the possibility of increasing costs as a result of the new arrangements being proposed by the Scrutiny Panel is a concern, namely an increase in the number of meetings, the introduction of evening Licensing Committee meetings and the delegation of Taxi Driver licensing to officers; and

(c) The role of Licensing Committees in terms of achieving impartial decisions on applications may be compromised by more local committee arrangements unless views expressed by local residents or councillors have supporting evidence.

5. Taking points (a) and (b) together, there is a worry about whether the benefits which members see from their current proposals can be justified in cost terms, bearing in mind some of the figures quoted in the report. Point (c) is a concern about consistency of approach between the two licensing "areas" being discussed bearing in mind that licensing rules are prescriptive and there are not discretions available that "local" arrangements may imply.

## **Other Issues**

6. In separate discussions with the Chairman, it was agreed that the Panel could usefully look at the following matters:

(a) the need for consultation on these changes with interested parties including licence holders;

(b) the need for additional budgetary provision in the 2014/15 budget or a supplementary estimate;

7. In addition, there is a particular concern within the Corporate Support Services Directorate about the transfer of the taxi licensing role to officers. This has not been assessed in terms of work load for the two officers concerned but it is felt that additional responsibilities of this nature may well create workload problems. Similar concerns would also apply to staff from Democratic Services.

8. The appointment of pro rata Committees/Sub Committees (see recommendations (1) and (2)) may need careful consideration if Sub Committee memberships are to be drawn pro rata from the membership of the main Committee.