

# **FAREHAM**

## **BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Report to Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee**

**Date**           **29 September 2020**

**Report of:**     **Head of Environmental Health**

**Subject:**       **COVID-19 SERVICE IMPACT**

#### **SUMMARY**

In March this year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the Government put the country into lock down and it remained in that state until recently when things have started opening back up. On the 20 March 2020 the Council took the decision to close to the public and for staff to work from home where possible. For Environmental Health and Licensing most staff were able to work from home, but a small number continued to work from the Civic Offices during lockdown. In terms of the Service provision, most services continued to be provided. The biggest impact, over and above staff having to deal with the situation and the emotional and psychological effects of the situation was the impact on the Council's Licensing income. This has been highlighted and the information fed into the recent Emergency Budget report that was presented to the Executive on 7 September 2020.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee note the content of the report and, in particular, the financial effect of Covid-19.

## **INTRODUCTION**

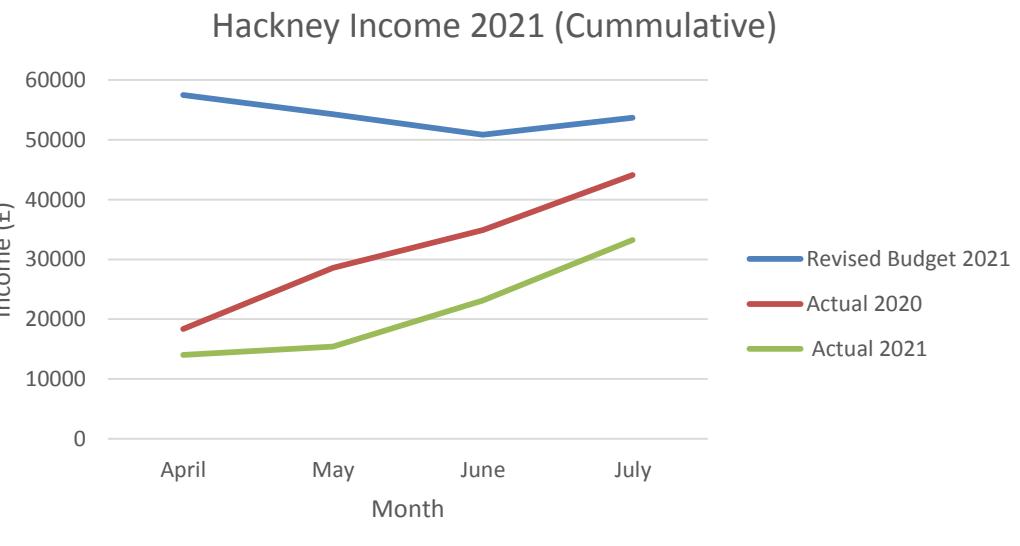
1. In March this year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the Government put the country into lock down and it remained in that state until recently when things have started opening back up. On the 20 March 2020 the Council took the decision to close to the public and for staff to work from home where possible.
2. For Environmental Health and Licensing most staff were able to work from home, but a small number continued to work from the Civic Offices during lockdown. In terms of the Service provision, most services continued to be provided. Routine food safety inspections, out of hours stray dogs and pest control (apart from emergencies) were all suspended.

## **LOCKDOWN SERVICES**

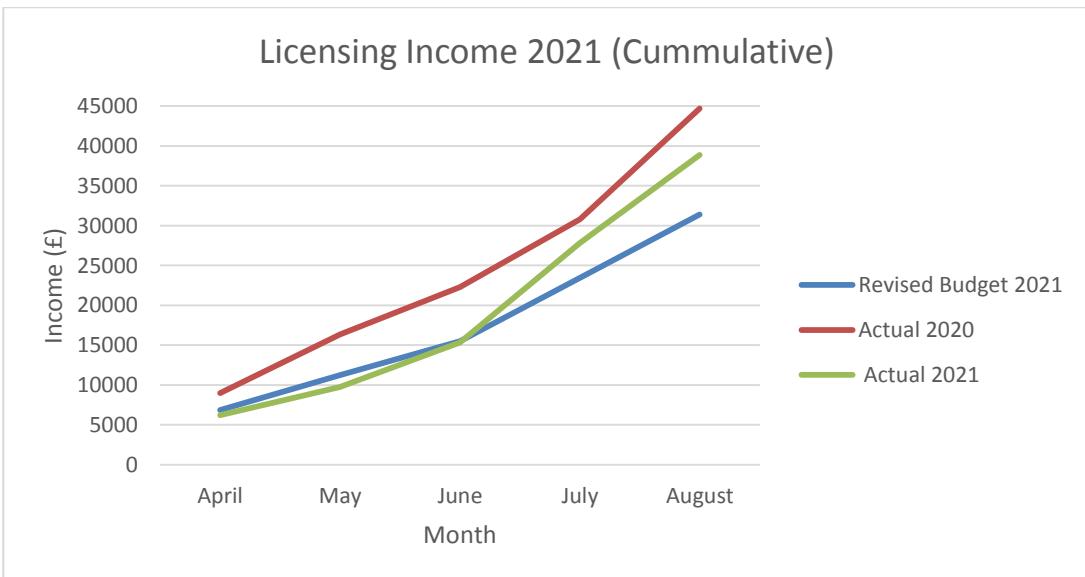
3. Throughout lockdown the Licensing team continued to provide a service from the Civic Offices. Although Licensing wasn't as busy as usual, as licensed premises were closed and events not allowed, the team continued to deal with a lot of Covid related enquiries and also dealing with taxi driver and vehicle renewals in person.
4. When the economic activity came to a standstill in March, 2 members of the team were seconded to the Crematorium to provide resilience to the back office operation there. One has returned to Environmental Health in August and the other is due back in October.
5. A number of taxi drivers requested that their licence be suspended during lock down so as they didn't lose the time period on their licence while they were not working. The licensing team facilitated this. During lockdown we were unable to issue new driver licences as we were unable to hold knowledge tests to complete their application process, this has now resumed (with social distancing).

## **INCOME**

6. The biggest effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on Licensing has been the effect on income.
7. The Hackney Carriage income has become very turbulent as a result of Covid-19. As expected, the income suffered a 46% drop in the opening months of April and May totalling approximately £13,000. Since June the service income has begun to recover with income received in the months of June and July exceeding the levels received in 2019. As at the end of August, Hackney income has experienced a 32% loss in income, based on the previous year, totalling approximately £16,500.



8. Licensing income experienced a significant drop of 30%, totalling approximately £7,000, during the first quarter compared to the figure from the previous year. During July the service significantly recovered and received a level of income 47% higher than the previous year. Overall, as at the end of August the service is currently experiencing a 13% loss in income which totals approximately £5,800.



9. It has been difficult in establishing a revised budget, as Licensing income is linked to economic activity and there is obviously still uncertainty around the effect of the virus going forward.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

10. There is a risk to the Council's income which has been highlighted and the information fed into the recent Emergency Budget report that was presented to the Executive on 7 September 2020.

## **CONCLUSION**

11. Despite unprecedeted challenges, Environmental Health and more specifically the Licensing Section has continued to deliver its Services throughout lockdown. Most staff are still working a proportion of their time from home in order to maintain social distancing within the Civic Offices and also to be prepared for further home working should there be any sort of local lock down going forward.

### **Background Papers:**

None

### **Reference Papers:**

None

### **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Ian Rickman (Ext 4773 )