

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Safer City Partnership Strategy Group – For Information	18 September 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Public Protection Service (Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards) update	
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Markets & Consumer Protection	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Gavin Stedman, Port Health & Public Protection Director	

### Summary

The Department of Markets & Consumer Protection contributes to the work of the Safer City Partnership (SCP) through its Public Protection Service which comprises Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards. Work relating to the SCP is on-going in relation to the following priorities:

- **Acquisitive Crime**
  - Investment Fraud – Trading Standards continues to collaborate with the City of London Police over Operation Broadway, now extended across London via Operation Offspring.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour**
  - Illegal street trading – Additional resources have been put into a campaign to eliminate ice cream vans and nut sellers from the Square Mile.
  - Noise complaints service – a 24/7 service is provided.
- **Night Time Economy Crime and Nuisance**
  - The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown resulted in all licensed premises being closed and only approximately 10% re-opening once the lockdown has been eased.
  - Late Night Levy – this has generated approximately £460K for the third full year of the operation of the levy.
  - Safety Thirst – The scheme for 2020 has been deferred due to the COVID19 pandemic.
  - Licensing controls and enforcement – enforcement activities and use of the Late-Night Levy have kept the number of licence reviews and suspension notices at a relatively low level.

This report details enforcement activity and progress in the above areas.

The Service contributed to the One Safe City programme and will be involved in the Secure City Programme. It is also represented on other relevant Boards and Groups.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Consumer Protection part of the Department of Markets and Consumer Protection comprises three services:
  - Animal Health
  - Port Health
  - Public Protection
2. The latter includes Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards, all of which contribute to the work of the SCP, specifically the 2019- 22 SCP Strategic Plan outcomes of:
  - Acquisitive Crime – We will work to protect our businesses, workers, residents and visitors from theft and fraud with an emphasis on cyber-crime.
  - Anti-Social Behaviour – Respond effectively to behaviour that makes the City a less pleasant place.
  - Night Time Economy Crime and Nuisance – To ensure the City remains a safe place to socialise.
3. Whilst there are routine proactive and reactive responses to community needs, there is also a range of projects underway, details of which are provided below.

### **Current Position**

#### **Economic Crime**

The City of London Trading Standards Service (COLTSS) primarily works in partnership with others in support of the SCP's outcome to *protect our residents, workers, businesses and visitors from theft and fraud*.

4. COLTSS continues to support and actively participate in Operation Broadway, a joint project with the City of London Police, National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, National Trading Standards 'Regional Investigation Team', the Financial Conduct Authority, the Insolvency Service and HM Revenue and Customs. Operation Broadway aims to disrupt the activity of criminals engaged in investment fraud.
5. Key actions include:
  - a) Operation Broadway meetings continue to take place every two weeks, with partners sharing intelligence about possible fraudulent activity taking place within the City of London and surrounding Boroughs. Deployments then normally take place the following week to inspect premises and find out exactly what is going on. This leads to the gathering of intelligence and the opportunity is taken to investigate and disrupt the activities of businesses that may be involved in fraud. These visits are led by a Trading Standards Officer due to the powers of entry afforded to officers under the legislation that the service enforces. During the COVID-19

lockdown, meetings have continued to take place virtually and although it has not been possible to carry out physical visits, enquiries continue to be made by telephone and email.

- b) Trading Standards officers continue to speak to victims of investment fraud and many of the stories that we hear are heart breaking with life changing sums of money being lost. One recent case involved a gentleman who had lost £140,000. The voluntary Code of Practice that was introduced by the Payment Systems Regulator at the end of May 2019 continues to require banks to compensate customers that have fallen victim to what is called 'authorised push payment' fraud. Officers are now actively advising investment fraud victims who have lost money about this potential route to compensation with growing success. In the case of the gentleman who lost £140,000, the support provided by Trading Standards led directly to him recovering £100,000 for which he was extremely grateful.
- c) An emerging problem revolves around what are called 'lead generators.' Consumers who are looking to invest money into financial investment products like bonds very often carry out internet searches and are drawn to lead generator sites that offer attractive returns and "full protection". The lead generators pass on the consumer details to criminals who then carry out the hard sell. The lead generators pay money to internet search engines to appear at the top of any searches, but it is proving impossible to trace who they are. The lead generator websites are being taken down by the FCA and Op Broadway, but they very quickly set up again. Trading Standards are developing a project plan around this problem and intend to apply to the Community Safety Partnership for some funding.
- d) Trading Standards continue to maintain and build further good working relationships with mail forwarding businesses and serviced office providers in the City. It was recently discovered that some mail forwarding businesses who also act as company formation agents were being selective about the types of mail that they would forward to their clients. The consequence of this is that consumers who are trying to resolve legitimate problems by writing to the relevant business were simply having their mail returned. If a business has a registered office address, it is the view of Trading Standards that it must be possible for this mail to be successfully delivered. Funding of £6,000 was secured from National Trading Standards to seek Counsel's opinion about this practice which was received in May and every effort will be made by the City of London Trading Standards to drive changes in this sector. It is likely to be a long process, but it is an important national issue that needs to be addressed.
- e) Trading Standards has recently been involved in work being coordinated by the National Economic Crime Centre (part of the National Crime Agency). Information is being shared about Operation Broadway and the model has been used to help tackle fraud associated with COVID-19.
- f) Trading Standards have been investigating complaints from vulnerable job seekers who have responded to adverts offering employment. The reality is that the jobs do not exist, and job seekers have ended up paying hundreds of pounds for training courses that are a complete waste of time. This investigation is now complete and legal proceedings have been instituted. A three-week trial was scheduled to take place at the Central

Criminal Court in August 2020 but this has now been delayed until July 2021 due to pressures on the Court service caused by COVID-19.

- g) In the City, there very few retailers that sell knives. However, test purchasing using a 17-year-old was carried out during October 2019 and one of the retailers sold without asking any questions. This matter has now been investigated and legal proceedings have been instituted. The case was due to be heard at City Magistrates Court but that case too has been delayed due to COVID-19.

<b>2020/2021</b>	<b>2019/20 Total</b>	<b>Q1 Apr- Jun</b>	<b>Q2 Jul- Sep</b>	<b>Q3 Oct- Dec</b>	<b>Q4 Jan- Mar</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>a. Op Broadway deployments</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>N/A</b>				
<b>b. Disruptions/interventions</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>				
<b>c. Adopted for further action by other agencies</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>				
<b>d. Contacts with 'enablers'</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>N/A</b>				
<b>e. RP07 forms submitted to Companies House by serviced office providers</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>N/A</b>				
<b>f. Website suspension requests</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>				
<b>g. Promotional / prevention activity - e.g. publicity campaigns, days of action, attendance at external events, press coverage</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>N/A</b>				

**NB:** *Figures for Q1 - Apr-Jun were not all available on this occasion.*

- h) With the onset of COVID-19 that led to lockdown in March 2020, new legislation was introduced by Government to close businesses. This legislation placed a responsibility on Local Authorities to enforce and the necessary authorisations were provided to Trading Standards Officers and Environmental Health Officers. The impact of lockdown meant that commuters no longer came into the City and most business premises closed down due to there being no customers. Trading Standards kept in close contact with CoL Police to deal with any intelligence that businesses may be opening illegally. A relatively small number of businesses were advised about the closure regulations and there were no breaches requiring prohibition notices to be issued or prosecutions to be commenced. The situation in the City was very different from the rest of London. Colleagues in many other Boroughs had a very different experience with businesses seeking to remain open illegally. One of the early issues highlighted by COVID-19 across the UK was price gouging and the marketing of PPE that was unsafe. This formed part of a COVID-19 campaign that was run by London Trading Standards  
<http://www.londontradingstandards.org.uk/campaigns/london-trading-standards-week-2020/>

## **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

6. The Public Protection Teams support the SCP outcome of tackling and responding to anti-social behaviour
7. Two issues that relate to the work of this committee that are being tackled by the Public Protection Service are:
  - Illegal Street Trading
  - Noise complaints service
8. The COVID-19 pandemic resulting in the lockdown of hospitality and workplaces in the City changed the nature of the antisocial behaviour issues the City was facing. Licensed premises ceased to be a source of complaint but construction noise complaints increased as did complaints about social distancing. The teams have worked hard to implement and educate as new guidance and Acts such as the Business and Planning Act 2020 have been released to support the easing of lockdown such as the granting of pavement licences and the extension of construction working hours.

## **Illegal Street Trading**

8. The Section 101 agreements with the London Borough of Southwark and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets are now in place; these allow the City to enforce against illegal trading just over the border into Southwark and Tower Hamlets, for example on the south side of Millennium Bridge and all of Tower Bridge.
9. All known hotspots were visited during lockdown and intelligence shared with partner agencies. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 there has been little evidence of illegal street trading. However, this has now picked up again as of August 2020 when the COVID-19 restrictions were eased and footfall slowly returned.
10. A number of cases are in the process of being taken to court which will be heard when courts resume a post Covid-19 level of hearings.
11. The operation has run throughout the year. Because of the foregoing and the continued on-street presence of Licensing Officers, illegal street trading has either been eliminated within the City of London and the bridges or stopped immediately the traders set up.

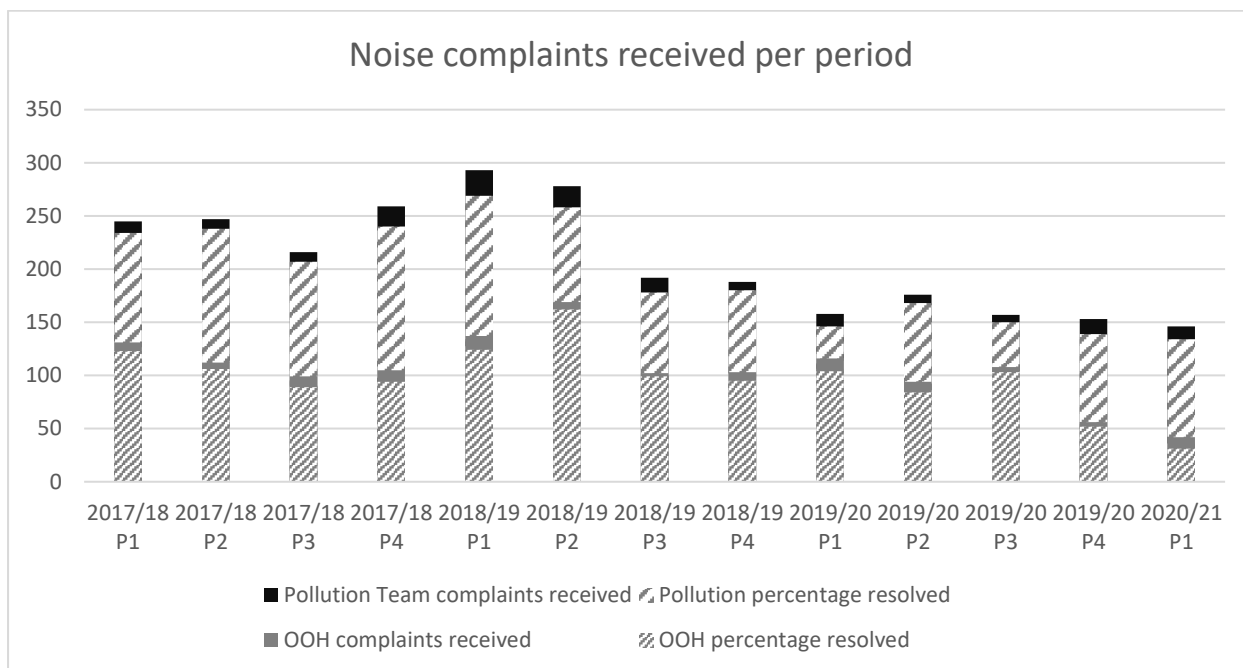
## **Noise Complaints Service**

12. The Pollution Team dealt with 153 noise complaints between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 of which 92.5% were resolved. In addition, they also assessed and commented on 75 Planning and Licensing applications and 168 applications for variations of work outside the normal working hours. Comparatively in the same period for 19/20 the Pollution Team dealt with 158 noise complaints of which 93% were resolved.

13. The Out of Hours Service dealt with 42 complaints between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and response (visit) times were within the target performance indicator of 60 minutes in 76.19% of cases. Comparatively, in the same period for 19/20 the Out of Hours Service dealt with 116 complaints and response (visit) times were within the target performance indicator of 60 minutes in 90.09% of cases, and often only 30 minutes.
14. The Pollution Team served two S.61 Prior Consent Control of Pollution Act Notices and two S.61 consents between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. In the same period for 2019/20 the Pollution Team issued one S.80 Environmental Protection Act 1990 notice, two S.61 (Prior consent) Control of Pollution Act Notices and three Section 61 consents.
15. The trends for total noise related complaints are set out in the tables below for information.

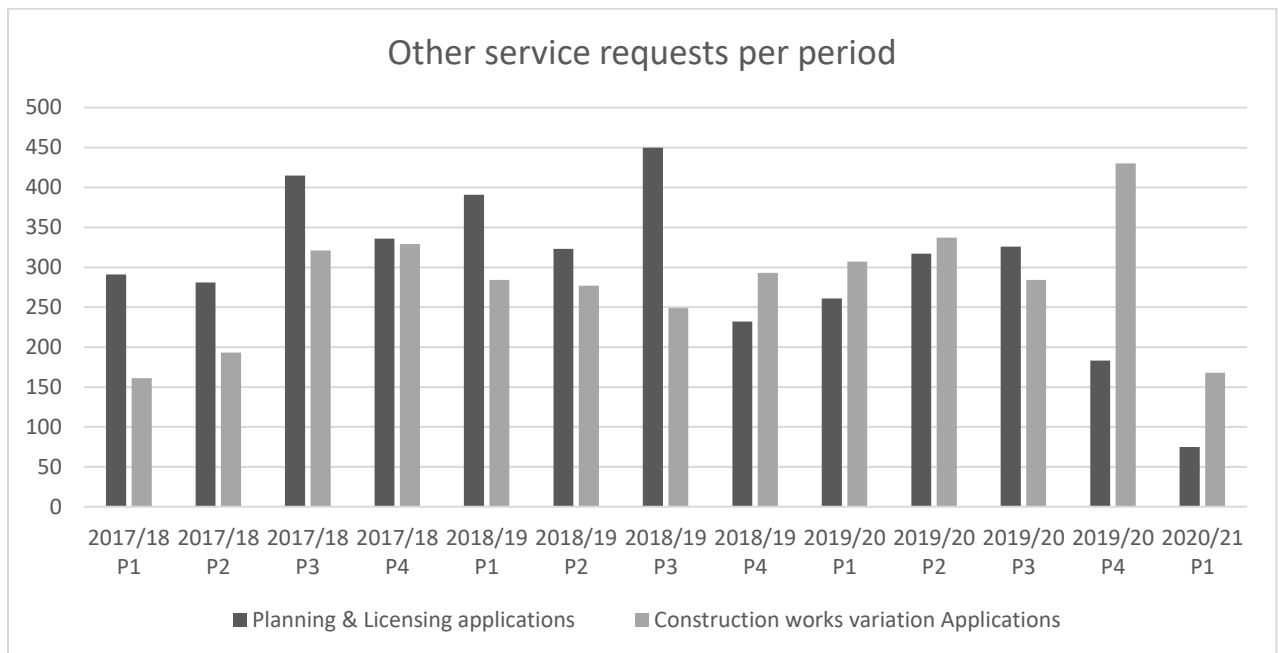
#### Noise Complaints

Year	Period	Pollution Team Noise complaints received	Percentage resolved	OOH Team Noise complaints received	Percentage resolved within KPI (60min)
2017/18	1	245	95.9%	131	94.9%
2017/18	2	247	96.4%	112	95.3%
2017/18	3	216	96.3%	99	90.9%
2017/18	4	259	93.8%	105	90.1%
2018/19	1	293	92.8%	137	91.5%
2018/19	2	278	93.9%	169	96.3%
2018/19	3	192	93.8%	102	98.2%
2018/19	4	188	96.3%	103	93.5%
2019/20	1	158	93%	116	90.9%
2019/20	2	176	96%	94	90.3%
2019/20	3	157	96.2%	108	96.5%
2019/20	4	153	91.5%	56	94.6%
2020/21	1	146	92.5%	42	76.1%



### **Noise Service Requests**

Year	Period	Planning & Licensing applications	Construction works variation Applications	S.60 Notices Issued	S.80 EPA Notices	S.61 Notices Issued	Consent
2017/18	1	291	161	2	0	0	1
2017/18	2	281	193	4	1	5	3
2017/18	3	415	321	0	1	12	1
2017/18	4	336	329	0	1	7	1
2018/19	1	391	284	0	0	5	8
2018/19	2	323	277	0	0	4	6
2018/19	3	450	249	1	1	6	7
2018/19	4	232	293	0	0	3	4
2019/20	1	261	307	0	1	2	3
2019/20	2	317	337	0	2	1	1
2019/20	3	326	284	0	2	3	3
2019/20	4	183	430	4	1	0	0
2020/21	1	75	168	0	0	2	2



16. The Team continue to supply advice to construction sites in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing measures on site have reduced the amount of work that can be achieved and have changed working methods. Local authorities have been advised by Government to be sympathetic to applications by developers for increasing working hours and a formal process through the planning system has now been implemented through the Business and Planning Act 2020. The pollution team is working with Planning to manage and process these applications. No applications have been received to date under the new formal arrangements.

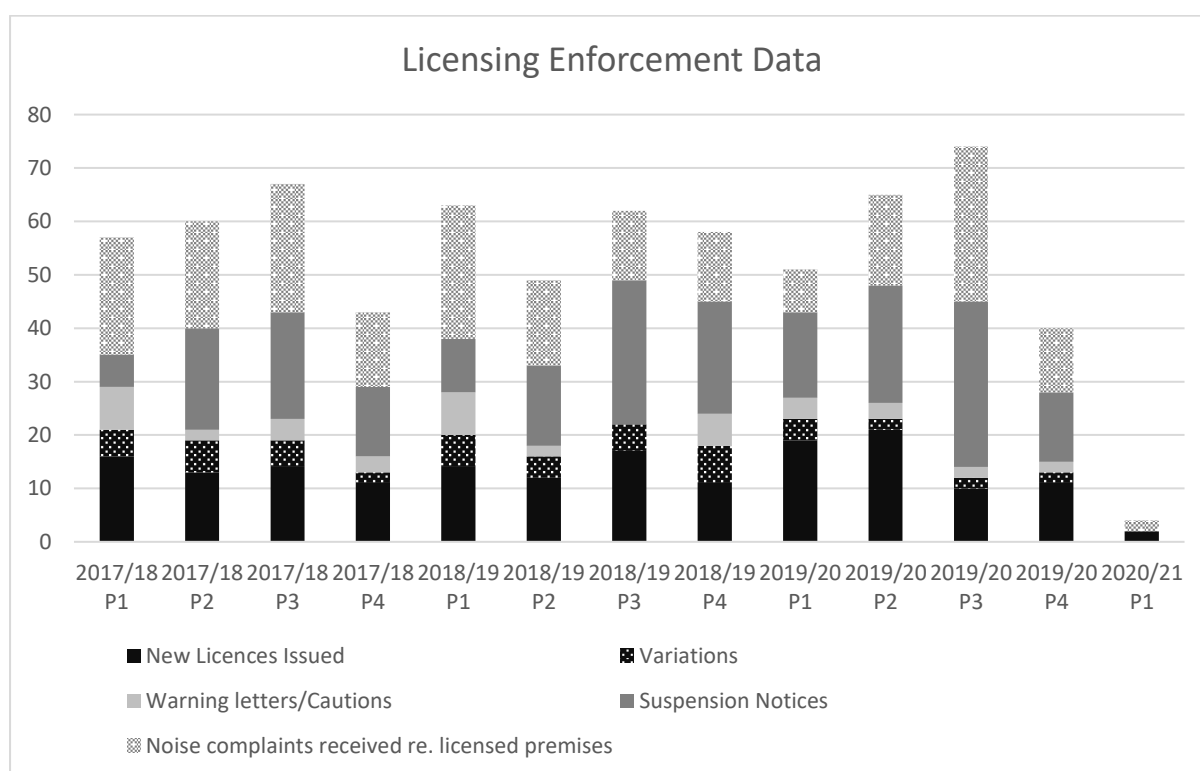
17. The pollution team continue to predominately work from home. Although a presence in the City is maintained through the Street Environment Officers and pollution team officers. Officers are also available to attend at short notice from home if required. Visits within premises are not generally undertaken but can be if essential, subject to the necessary risk assessments.



## Enforcement

18. The Licensing Team undertakes inspections and enforcement in relation to the Licensing Act 2003 and the table below shows the action taken regarding licensed premises over the last three years.

Year	Period	New Licences Issued	Variations	Warning letters/Cautions	Suspension Notices	Noise complaints received re. licensed premises
<u>2017/18</u>	1	16	5	8	6	22
<u>2017/18</u>	2	13	6	2	19	20
<u>2017/18</u>	3	14	5	4	20	24
<u>2017/18</u>	4	11	2	3	13	14
<u>2018/19</u>	1	14	6	8	10	25
<u>2018/19</u>	2	12	4	2	15	16
<u>2018/19</u>	3	17	5	0	27	13
<u>2018/19</u>	4	11	7	6	21	13
<u>2019/20</u>	1	19	4	4	16	8
<u>2019/20</u>	2	21	2	3	22	17
<u>2019/20</u>	3	10	2	2	31	29
<u>2019/20</u>	4	11	2	2	13	12
<u>2020/21</u>	1	2	0	0	0	2



19. The number of hearings and reviews remains at a low-level year on year. During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, there has been one hearing, for the George and Vulture which had been postponed due to COVID-19 but was heard on 16

June . This was held remotely in accordance with the revised Coronavirus regulations for public meetings. There have been no requests to review a premises licence.

20. The 'RAG' risk assessment scheme operated by the Licensing Team with information from City Police, Licensing, Fire Brigade and Pollution Team has been frozen as of 31 March 2020 due to COVID-19 with no licensable activity permitted since 23 March 2020. On 30<sup>th</sup> June, one premises was flagged as red, three as amber and the rest all green in a total of 931 premises. Once premises reopened a Licensing committee decision was taken that was supported by the Licensing Liaison Partnership, to continue the scheme from the point it was frozen based on the usual rolling 6-month period.
21. Noise matters related to licensed premises remain low and are reported to the Licensing Committee. The number of noise complaints specifically associated with licensed premises is set out above with the Licensing Event Data to illustrate the trend over the last three years. The number is consistent with previous years and there is no indication of any overall increasing trend.
22. This supports the generally good findings of the 'RAG' assessments in the City, although on occasion a number of complaints are received about individual premises which then have targeted enforcement to resolve the issue.

### **Safety Thirst**

23. The Safety Thirst scheme is highly regarded by licensees in the City of London and many are keen to participate and to improve on their level of accreditation. All premises accredited in 2019 have been offered additional training and short seminars on relevant issues. The 2020 scheme has been deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the financial challenges already experienced by the sector, the timeline for reopening and the likely burden to be placed on the industry in complying with new safety regulations, the scheme will not be run in the same way this year. As the scheme is the City's best practice scheme linked to the late-night levy discount, accreditation period will be extended from 12 months to 24 months for those premises accredited in 2019.
24. In 2019 there were 72 premises awarded in the categories of pass, commended and Highly commended.

The three overall winners were:

- The Gable Bar & Restaurant, winning it for the second year running.
- The Steelyard Nightclub
- Mrs Foggs Bar

### **Late Night Levy**

25. The amount of levy collected in 2018/19 was £463,000 and has provided a similar level of income to 2017/18 (£460,000), and 2016/17 (£454,000) suggesting there is still no disincentive against trading because of the levy. 70% of the levy, approximately £325,000 goes to the City of London Police for activities involving improving the impact of licensed activities on the night-time economy. The remaining 30% of the levy goes to the City Corporation. The 2019/20 levy income to date is broadly in line with previous years.

26. A report on the income and expenditure is provided annually to the Licensing Committee with the latest report considered at their 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020 meeting.
27. Areas of significant expenditure on the City Police portion of the levy continue to be the night time policing of licensed activities, an additional intelligence post in the City Police Licensing Team and the Police Licensing Inspector, which was agreed by the Licensing Committee at its October 2018 meeting. The levy provides ongoing support for the 'out of hours' noise service and additional cleansing activity. A further proactive noise and cleansing weekend service will commence in 2020 when premises are permitted to re-open. A levy supported project from Club Soda, that extends their scheme to encourage consumption of less alcoholic drinks and alcohol-free alternatives, continues to promote lower and non-alcoholic drinks at licensed premises in the City.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

28. The Public Protection Service contributed to the Safer City Partnership Strategic Plan 2019 - 22, and its priorities and objectives.
29. The Markets and Consumer Protection Department contributed to the One Safe City Programme, was represented on the Safer Communities Board and will be part of the arrangements for the Secure City Programme.
30. The Department is also represented on other relevant Boards and Groups, including the Serious and Organised Crime Board.

### **Conclusion**

31. The Public Protection Service continues to support the priorities and objectives of the Safer City Partnership through routine work, but also via specific projects and contributions to plans and strategies.

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