

Review of Legal Services

City of Edinburgh Council

29 May 2008

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report has been written in response to a motion of the City of Edinburgh Council approved on 8 February 2007 in regard to the setting of the budget for 2007/08:

"To instruct the Director of Corporate Services to undertake a review of Licensing and Legal Services; to include consideration of the charging mechanisms in relation to core support and projects."

- 1.2 The report covers the general review of the Division. A paper covering the Licensing aspect of the Division's duties was considered and approved by the, then, Executive of the Council on 27 February 2007.
- 1.3 On 25 October 2007, the Council further noted that the review of Legal Services would report by the end of 2007 and instructed the Chief Executive to ensure that the review was urgently completed and that the findings be reported to Policy and Strategy Committee on 15 April 2008. It was subsequently agreed that it would be deferred to a suitable date for the full Council's consideration.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Legal Services Division is a demand led service, managed within the Department of Corporate Services, responding to increasing and varying demands for legal advice to all areas of the Council including Elected Members, Chief Executive, Returning Officer, Projects and the Monitoring Officer. Dedicated legal support is also provided for Council priorities such as Child Protection and Community Safety. The Division provides services to some external clients including Glasgow and Scottish Borders Councils in respect of Court of Session Agency work. There is also a wide range of work to support the activities which the Council engages in relating to the economy, its commercial agreements, strategic projects, planning and transportation, its property portfolio and other commercial activity. In addition, the work of a capital city frequently requires complex, novel legal advice and solutions. Appendix One shows a more thorough analysis of the Division's workload.

- 2.2 Some of the Division's activity is such that it does not lend itself well to planning it is often required at short notice and within short timescales. Most of this activity has the potential to have significant financial, operational, commercial and/or reputational consequences. The workload pressures facing the Division are significant and this, coupled with recent high staff turnover has caused severe operational difficulties. This, in turn, has resulted in the prioritisation of some areas of activity ahead of others. The potential detrimental impact of this to service delivery is of serious concern.
- 2.3 The Division has a 2008/09 revenue expenditure budget of £5.922m and an income budget of £5.268m. The Division's core activities are recharged to users either directly through invoice or ledger-recharge or indirectly, as with all other support services, through the annual central support costs exercise.
- 2.4 While the Division maintained a projected break-even position during 2007/08, this was achieved with great difficulty and involved extensive management input. A forecast overspend in staffing within the Division's Miscellaneous Licensing service (£0.319m) was offset by underspending in the core services function.
- 2.5 The underspend was necessary in order to address the difficulty in licensing but was facilitated by the high numbers of current staff vacancies and a moratorium on filling such vacancies across Corporate Services. This situation cannot be sustained beyond the short term as the Division, without key staff, is unable to provide the level of responsiveness and service required by client departments. In order to address these issues, the cross-subsidy between Miscellaneous Licensing and Core Services must be removed and critical vacancies identified and recruited to.
- 2.6 For 2008/09 and beyond, it is essential that agreed work-planning and funding mechanisms for growth in legal service demand are introduced with client departments where planned activities, including new legislation and major projects, result in the need to fund additional legal staff and resources. In the absence of a client-held funding stream, the funding required should be explicitly sought through the budget setting process. Mechanisms must also address declining service activity and have regard to difficulties around the resourcing of the significant levels of necessary urgent unplanned legal activity referred to in paragraph 2.2 above.

Main report

3. Budgets

3.1 Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the 2008/09 revenue budget across the range of functions in the Legal Services Division:

Table 1:

2008/09 Budget	District Court	HMO Licensing	Cab Licensing	Misc. Licensing	Core Services	Total Legal Services
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Gross Expenditure	0.616	2.017	0.757	0.388	2.144	5.922
Income	0.000	2.097	0.895	0.948	1.328	5.268
Net Expenditure*	0.616	(0.080)	(0.138)	(0.560)	0.816	0.654

(*NB: The budget for the District Court will be reduced by Government Grant of £0.428m)

3.2 The 2008/09 budgeted income of £5.268m for the Division is split as follows:

- License fee income (HMO, Cab, Miscellaneous) - £3.940m
- Core Service recharges to the non general fund (capital, joint boards, housing) £0.886million
- Core services - charges to Glasgow for Court Services - £0.186m
- Core services - other external fees - £0.256m

Other funding

3.3 In recent years there has been growth in demand for legal advice in a number of service departments, predominantly in response to major legislative and project developments. Key examples include Child Protection, PPP2, Single Status, Waste Management and latterly Trams.

3.4 The costs of legal staff providing dedicated support in these areas are charged directly to lead departments. Total staffing costs of £0.700m are estimated in 2008/09 in addition to those costs incurred directly by the Legal Services Division. These costs have been affordable to departments mainly as a result of specific new Scottish Government funding streams or specific funding bids through the Council's budget setting process.

Budget Issues: District Court

3.5 The District Court Service transferred to the Scottish Court Service (SCS) on 10th March 2008 and did not form part of the review. However, the SCS did not require the district court building at Parliament Square as part of the transfer. Until suitable alternative tenants can be found, a commitment to £0.325m per annum for lease costs remains with the Council. Further smaller sums, estimated at £0.025m per annum will be required to ensure the empty building is kept maintained and secured. The lease for this property extends to 2022.

- 3.6 Following the transfer and adjustment of government grant in 2008/09, a residual budget of £0.188m will remain with the Division and will be available to meet leasing and other costs. Until tenants are found for the building, there is therefore a potential annual budget pressure to the Department of £0.162m. The City Development Department is actively searching for a new occupier for the court building.

Budget Issues: Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing

- 3.7 HMO Licensing was originally brought into force under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and is now contained in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2005. Applications are checked to establish the fitness of the operator of the house in multiple occupation and the condition of the premises is also checked to ensure that it meets standards which the Council has adopted for these houses.
- 3.8 The departments of Corporate Services, Services for Communities, and City Development are all involved in vetting applications as are the Police and Fire Service. Services for Communities conduct property inspections and enforcement, City Development covers planning and building aspects and Corporate Services provides administration.
- 3.9 Current HMO legislation allows local authorities to recover the costs of providing this licensing function. However, income cannot be used to subsidise other areas of activity. Within the Council, the financial arrangements around HMO licensing are such that the Legal Services Division acts as a collecting point for all cross departmental costs and for the license income to offset these costs.
- 3.10 The estimated direct costs of HMO activity, £2.017m in 2008/09, are fully recovered by fee income. The income target of £2.097m was slightly higher than this in recognition of indirect costs such as accommodation, heating, lighting which should be covered by fee income. Any unplanned surplus arising within a financial year is transferred to an HMO earmarked reserve and any deficit would draw upon the reserve. The draft 2007/08 final accounts reflect an indicative surplus position.
- 3.11 Periodic reviews of licence levels and Council costs are carried out to ensure the service operates at a breakeven position and is not subsidised from other areas of the Legal Services budget.

Budget Issues: Taxi/Private Hire Cars (Cab Licensing)

- 3.12 The Council has adopted a licensing system for taxis, private hire cars and their drivers in accordance with the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. The purpose of the licensing scheme is to prevent crime and to ensure public order and safety. This includes driver vetting and training as well as annual vehicle inspections.

- 3.13 Fees for taxi/private hire cars and drivers are permitted, by statute, to be set at a level which allows costs to be recovered. A periodic review of license fees ensures that fees are maintained at a level which will enable a breakeven position. When an unplanned surplus is achieved this is ring-fenced for the benefit of the cab license service and this has, in the past, resulted in a reduction in fee levels as a means of reducing/eliminating the surplus. Again, surpluses cannot be used to subsidise other areas of activity.
- 3.14 This licensing scheme is self-financing and the legislative mechanisms in place to allow recovery of costs should ensure that this area of activity creates no financial pressures for the rest of the Division. In 2008/09, estimated direct expenditure is £0.757m, fully met by budgeted fee income of £0.895m, with a residual element to meet indirect costs attributable to the process. The draft 2007/08 final accounts reflect an indicative surplus position.

Budget Issues: Miscellaneous Licensing

- 3.15 This area of activity consists of a range of varying types of licence. It includes some that are statutory in nature, such as liquor, gaming and cinema. Others such as public entertainment and late hours catering are described as "civic" with fee levels set by local authorities.
- 3.16 While the costs of HMO and Cab licensing, can, by statute, be fully recovered by fees, a break-even position for the miscellaneous range of licenses is less achievable due to the mix of statutory and local authority (civic) control over fee setting in place.
- 3.17 The Division's expenditure budget for miscellaneous licensing in 2008/09 is £0.388m; this budget solely funds the Division's input to the miscellaneous licensing process. Alongside the input from this Division, other departments also incur costs for miscellaneous licensing activity. The income budget of £0.948m reflects recovery of the total cost of all departments that have input to the process.
- 3.18 This is inconsistent with the accounting treatment of HMO/Cab licensing where all costs and fee income are consolidated within the Division to enable full clarity around the breakeven or otherwise of the licensing function under consideration.
- 3.19 Table 2 below shows the draft final outturn position for 2007/08 for Miscellaneous Licensing:

Table 2: Miscellaneous Licensing

	2007/08 Budget £m	2007/08 Outturn £m	Variance £m
Expenditure	£0.388	£0.845	(£0.457) Adverse
Income	£0.864	£1.080	£0.216 Positive
Net Income	£0.476	£0.157	(£0.241) Adverse

- 3.20 The adverse variance of £0.241m is largely due to an overspend on staff costs, partially offset by additional licence fee income. This outturn reflects an improvement on the forecast deficit of £0.319m reported during the year and managed by maintaining underspend in core service activities.

Budget Issues: Licensing - General

- 3.21 A report approved by the Executive of the Council in February 2007 made recommendations to increase both professionally qualified and non qualified staffing levels to meet the demands of the service. It highlighted that the increased staffing costs as a result of changes to staffing levels were likely to have an impact on future license fees. While HMO/Cab licensing functions have been able to meet additional costs through fee income, the miscellaneous licensing function has not had the same scope to amend fees.
- 3.22 More recently, however, as a result of statutory changes to the liquor licensing process, there have been consequent changes to the fee setting arrangements. This has enabled an assessment of legal and other departmental costs for liquor licensing. It creates the potential opportunity to ease the overspend pressures in the miscellaneous licensing area by enabling the full costs of legal input to liquor licensing to be recovered through fee income. It is estimated that, as a result, a £0.100m budget for employee costs can be created, fully matched by an increased income budget. This would be effective, in the full year, from 2008/09.

Budget Issues: Core Services and Projects

- 3.23 Core Services, in the context of this review, refers to all legal service support provided by the Council Solicitor which is non-licensing and non-district court in nature. It includes advice, litigation, debt recovery, court work, conveyancing, planning, company work and support for major projects – predominantly, as described above, for departments of the Council. The Division also provides services to the Joint Boards, Police, Fire, FETA and Lothian Valuation Joint Board and a court service to Glasgow City and Scottish Borders Councils.
- 3.24 The 2008/09 gross revenue expenditure budget for these services is £2.144m. Estimated income is £1.328m. Of the budgeted income £0.886m is for legal support provided to Council services which sit outwith the general fund, predominantly relating to the generation of capital receipts and to council house sales. A further budget of £0.442m is generated through court services to other authorities, rentals and other fees and charges such as the recovery of costs following successful court actions.
- 3.25 The Council Solicitor has advised that income levels from Court of Session agency work for Glasgow and Scottish Borders Councils will fall in 2008/09 as a result of increases to Sheriff Court limits. This effectively means that more court actions will be able to be dealt with through local Sheriff Courts, reducing the need to use Edinburgh for Court of Session work. The impact on income levels for 2008/09 (budgeted at £0.186m) is currently being assessed.

3.26 The current funding position has resulted in available resources for funding for core services being at a critically low level at a time when activity is rising. For example, the Council processes more planning applications per year than any other authority in Scotland. In its budget for 2007-2010, the Council allocated additional resources to City Development to deliver a more effective Planning Service and to progress priority initiatives.

3.27 The draft 2007/08 final accounts position indicates a net underspend of £0.641m achieved through a combination of an underspending on employee costs (£0.350m) and increased income levels from charges to capital and non general funds (£0.291m). This position presents an improvement on the forecast underspend of £0.360m during the year, used to offset overspending in Miscellaneous Licensing.

4. Recruiting and Retaining Professional Staff

4.1 To enable the delivery of a successful in-house service the Legal Services Division needs to be able to recruit and retain suitably qualified and experienced staff. To establish current turnover, recruitment patterns and any issues arising from them, discussions were held with Principal Solicitors, the Division's Business Support Manager and with Human Resources advisors. The issues raised were:

Staff turnover, vacancies and recruitment

4.2 The Division is led by the Council Solicitor and, based on current Human Resources records, has a staffing complement, of 74.5 FTE. This is split: 38.5 FTE qualified solicitors (including two temporary staff), one Trainee Solicitor, one specialist "paralegal", a Business Support Manager, a Systems Manager and 33 FTE legal support staff two thirds of whom are dedicated to licensing activity. Included in the above staffing numbers are some Legal Staff who are directly charged to other departments.

4.3 Staff turnover in the Division has been high recently. During the first ten months of 2007/08, Human Resources records show that the Division lost fourteen staff with ten resignations and four reaching the end of temporary contracts.

4.4 Whilst there has been a moratorium on filling posts within the Corporate Services Department, it has been necessary to fill some posts in order to continue to deliver a basic level of service. The following staff were recruited during the same period: one Senior Solicitor, one solicitor, one Legal Support Officer and one Legal Support Assistant. All of these appointments were temporary.

4.5 The review process highlighted the following staffing changes which are symptomatic of the issues affecting the teams within the Division:

- three Solicitors have recently resigned from the Planning and Transportation team and a recruitment exercise is ongoing to fill 2 posts;

- two Senior Solicitors have been moved from the ASBO law team to take on childcare and Court of Session work. These posts are currently funded by Services for Communities but the work of the ASBO team has reduced in recent months;
- one Senior Solicitor, a part time Senior and a Legal Support Officer left the childcare law team. The Senior and LSO are both on maternity leave. Partial cover has been provided from the ASBO law team (as noted above);
- the temporary Senior and Trainee Solicitor are due to leave the commercial practice team shortly leaving 0.6 of Principal Solicitor time and 2 Senior Solicitors;
- since January 2008 there has been a vacancy in Company support and it has not been possible to provide cover. There is also no qualified support for debt recovery. This situation is unsustainable; and
- the Principal Solicitor, Court section, is currently working full time on major projects within City Development.

- 4.6 In addition to the staff movement described above and the continual balancing of limited resources against service need which this has involved, the Division faces significant workload pressures particularly: the increased workload from Additional Support for Learning and Adoption Legislation, the need to provide manager support for the Court Section, the lack of companies and debt recovery support, staff pressures in licensing and commercial practice, and the implications for the Planning and Transport team of the range of major projects underway or planned for the city.
- 4.7 As a consequence, staff require to be used flexibly across legal teams resulting in a complex and difficult to manage pattern of working. There are acute pressures on many of the remaining staff who have continued to deliver a highly professional service. Their dedication and commitment has gone beyond what can be reasonably expected with many working long hours to meet client needs.
- 4.8 The Division has advised of considerable difficulties in the recent past with the recruitment and retention of qualified and more experienced solicitors. It is considered that, in relation to Law Society Guidance, junior solicitor posts pay is comparable with the private sector but for more senior solicitors, pay is not competitive.
- 4.9 The general absence of long salary scales to enable performance and development opportunities for staff has had a negative effect. In the current employment market, the Division has found it necessary to appoint towards the upper end of the current Senior Solicitor salary scale to attract even basic grade solicitors with limited post qualifying experience.
- 4.10 In addressing the issues of pay parity and recruitment and retaining staff, it is anticipated that the outcome of the Pay Modernisation process will be a salary grade for solicitors which uses "wide banding" to incentivise career progression by offering competitive salaries.

4.11 In order to address issues of recruitment and retention and gain the views of the wider staff group a staff survey will be undertaken to include all staff in the Legal Services Division. The results of the survey will be used to inform the Director of Corporate Services and the Council Solicitor of any changes that can be made to stabilise the staffing situation.

5. Client engagement, Commissioning and Prioritising Work

5.1 Fundamental to managing service performance in the Division is a streamlined process of work planning and prioritisation. This necessitates having in place clearly understood processes for receiving and allocating work to the appropriately qualified and experienced staff member and the capacity to deliver the service in the required timescale. While this is recognised within the Division the systems which support the present arrangements need to be reviewed and, in some cases, new systems introduced.

5.2 As part of the present process the Division requires that all requests for work are to be made in writing to the Council Solicitor. However, discussions with staff and clients indicated that in practice this is not always the case:

- the quality and completeness of instructions from departments can vary widely and requests received are frequently incomplete;
- the receipt, allocation, completion and monitoring of work instructions is often inconsistent and unregulated; and
- instructions are often received directly by Principals and other senior staff;

Client Engagement

5.3 Discussions with both client departments and Principal Solicitors raised issues about the relationship between the client and service provider as follows:

- client departments acknowledged that the quality of instructions given was sometimes inconsistent precipitating a need for additional work from solicitors to clarify the remit before legal advice could be given;
- in the absence of named contacts they often relied on known personal contacts rather than using formal routes for inquiries; and
- Departments did not routinely take account of the impact on Legal Services staff resources, the presumption being that legal support would be made available.

- 5.4 Improved communication between the division and clients could help to ensure that work is planned more effectively. The introduction of a more formal approach to client engagement, such as identified client facing solicitors or attendance at departmental management team meetings, to allow the client and the Division to discuss forward planning of work, assess peaks and troughs of work, consider budget implications and the implications of new major projects or legal obligations should be considered. Client departments also do not currently have mechanisms in place to ensure that they consistently take account of the impact of their work scheduling or new work upon Legal services. This is an area requiring further development and in order to progress client engagement it is proposed to undertake a full survey of all clients. The survey will collect information on communication and liaison, work planning and budgeting.

Workload Planning

- 5.5 In order to assess workload trends and time spent on particular clients, the Division's time-recording system was examined over a twelve month period. The system currently in use has been developed internally using Access™ databases and needs to be refreshed. As a result, there are limited activity trends with which to plan the service. The detail of the analysis of recharges is contained in the background papers.
- 5.6 E-Government is currently assessing the most appropriate strategic approach to implementing a replacement time-recording system within Legal Services, following the development of a requirements document. A report has been drafted that includes an option appraisal of the main alternatives, including systems that are, existing, new or planned as part of the Smart City programme of work. An assessment of a number of systems will be undertaken to ensure best value and good procurement practice.
- 5.7 In the interim, care and discipline will be applied to populating the current time recording systems to evidence increases in workload. As part of the analysis underpinning the review, the team shared with the Division a number of suggested process changes that should help to populate the current time-recording system in a more robust and consistent manner.
- 5.8 In summary, stabilisation of staff resources and strengthening the engagement between the Division and its clients is essential to the future success of the Division. A more formalised relationship, possibly using new case management and Intranet based templates, will help to ensure that:
- Legal Services can deliver a more rapid response to customer requests;
 - joint work planning is undertaken across all clients;
 - contact is more appropriately targeted and is more consistent;
 - there is a means of alerting the client group to new legislation;
 - there is a formal means of gauging client needs, obtaining additional feedback and of developing enhanced partnerships with client departments in relation to the delivery of Legal Services; and

- there is a way to ensure the development of better costing of legal time into projects and ensure transparency of charging.

6 Procuring External Legal Advice

- 6.1 Core services provided by the Council's in house legal staff require to be supplemented by the use of specific specialist advice and guidance from time to time. The Council Solicitor, on behalf of the Director of Corporate Services, is responsible for engaging external legal advice, for client departments, ensuring that it is used only in the absence of in-house expertise.
- 6.2 The discharge of this responsibility is achieved partly through the use of external legal firms. Legal support for the Public Private Partnership schools programme, the provision of independent advice relating to equal pay compromise agreements, the settlement of court actions and other payments which involve legal firms acting as intermediaries such as Council buy-back arrangements are examples of circumstances where external legal support has been used. The associated costs are generally charged back to client departments or are funded from dedicated central funds.
- 6.3 There may be procurement opportunities available through the use of Framework Agreements which could be developed to meet legal service requirements at the most competitive rates. The Council Solicitor will investigate this matter with the assistance of the Finance Department and report back on her findings.

7. Efficiency Measures

- 7.1 As noted elsewhere in this report, the review has identified several actions which contribute to the overall aim of future-proofing the Council's Legal Service. The following actions will also have a distinct efficiency impact:
- improvements in client engagement and liaison arrangements;
 - the adoption of an intranet based templates for receiving work instructions and procuring Counsel's advice;
 - exploring SLAs as a means of engendering real transparency; and
 - exploring procurement framework agreements as a possible means of achieving more favourable terms from private sector providers.
- 7.2 Further efficiencies could be derived from further delegation of work to other grades of staff and ensuring that there is a mix of skills in the Division. The Council Solicitor is currently examining the scope for making greater use of Paralegal or trainee staff.

8 Review Outcomes

8.1 Key actions from the Review work includes:

- a) client engagement arrangements will be reviewed to consider the scope for adopting the model of client contact officers within the Division.
- b) an Intranet-based pro-forma/template will be developed to bring clarity around service instructions and form the initial basis for discussion between legal and client departments;
- c) once resources can be identified a suitable replacement case-management system will be procured;
- d) a comprehensive staff survey will be undertaken;
- e) for external legal advisers the Council Solicitor, in conjunction with procurement staff, will explore opportunities to achieve more favourable terms in the market place;
- f) the Division will work with departments to ensure that provision is made, wherever required, for the cost of legal advice in new Council projects and initiatives;
- g) consideration will be given to the further use of paralegals in the delivery of Legal Services; and
- h) a review of best practice across the legal profession to identify any further cost or quality benefits for the Council.

8.2 In order to address the finance and budget issues raised the following actions are recommended in 2008/09:

Miscellaneous Licensing:

It is critical that the cross subsidy between miscellaneous licensing and core service functions is removed. Actions to include:

- a) fully assess the impact of the implementation of new liquor licensing fees. It is currently estimated that additional income in the region of £100,000 will be generated, enabling employee and income budgets to be increased. Pressure on the core services budget will be alleviated by the same amount;
- b) in conjunction with Financial Services and for the purposes of budget clarity and transparency, the accounting treatment of the miscellaneous licensing account be amended to reflect the full costs of this licensing function to ensure consistency with the treatment for HMO and Cab Licensing and a proper comparison with fee income;

Core Services:

- c) the development and implementation of a structured mechanism to ensure close and consistent liaison with client departments over current and future work planning, enabling joint assessment of service needs. This should take into account, planned major projects, implementation of new legislation, and other growth or decline in business activities. This would be aligned with client liaison to ensure transparency and clarity of service deliverables;
- d) assess the level of unplanned/reactive work across the Council and the impact of this on the service;
- e) prioritisation of current staff vacancies. Critical posts to be costed and where affordable filled;
- f) assess impact on income levels from changes to demand for Court of Session work;

District Court

- g) close collaboration with the City Development Department during its search for an alternative occupier for the District Court building and assessment of the risk of non-occupation and the consequent budget pressure of around £162,000.

8.3 In order to address the finance and budget issues raised it is recommended that beyond 2008/09:

- a) further work to be undertaken to examine the scope for simplifying charges, particularly with regards to consolidating real income streams from non general fund areas, into a standardised monthly charging scheme.
- b) consideration be given to simplifying employee cost recharging arrangements through the transfer of budgets, from client departments, taking into account the duration of the dedicated support required.
- c) agreed work-planning and funding mechanisms for growth are needed where planned activities across the Council, including new legislation and major projects, result in the need to fund additional legal staff and resources. In the absence of a client-held funding stream, the funding required should be sought through the budget-setting processes. This process should also consider the resourcing of unplanned/urgent legal support requirements. Mechanisms must also address declining service activity and their consequent impact on staff resources and funding.

8.4 A full and comprehensive action plan drawn from all findings will be developed and monitored through implementation to completion.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Council notes the outcomes from the review and the associated actions detailed in section eight above.



JIM INCH
Director Corporate Services
26/05/08

Appendices One: Duties undertaken by the Division

Contact/tel/Email

Wards affected All

Background
Papers

APPENDIX ONE

BREADTH OF DUTIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE DIVISION

The Legal Services Division provides a broad range of services as illustrated by the following list.

- a) Providing legal advice on the Council's powers and duties under current legislation and case law, undertaking statutory procedures and providing formal guidance in relation to:
 - key legal advice to Elected Members, Committees, Government Bodies, External Clients – Police, Fire , FETA and Lothian Valuation Joint Board;
 - agency work for Glasgow City and Scottish Borders Councils on a commercial basis;
 - Planning and Transportation including planning inquiries, written submissions, planning agreements and planning enforcement activities;
 - Commercial and Conveyancing – All aspects of commercial conveyancing including property sales and purchases, supporting the delivery of the Council's annual capital receipts programme, leases, grants, acceptances, exchanging and enforcing rights on behalf of the Council in relation to all Property (both Council and non- Council owned). This also includes all Council House Sales Transactions and Buy Backs;
 - delivery of key commercial Council projects such as PPP, regeneration and the Strategic Work Programme, including, amongst others, support for key Council Project Boards in relation to transportation project and Edinburgh Trams;
 - litigation – raising, pursuing and defending all court actions, tribunals (including employment), inquiries (including major planning public inquiries), private legislation and orders on behalf of the Council;
 - debt recovery – the pursuit of claims through the court system;
 - specialist legal support and advice for Child Protection, Education, Community Safety, Anti Social Behaviour and Mental Health Tribunals including securing all appropriate court orders and remedies in relation to those activities;
 - company work – Legal support and advice for Council Companies; and
 - statutory functions e.g. Freedom of Information and oversight of the authority's surveillance activities;
- b) Licensing – All core corporate and functional work in relation to licensing including licensing policy and the activities of the Licensing Board and processing all Licensing applications and issuing all licences in relation to:
 - Houses in Multiple Occupation;
 - taxi/private hire cars;
 - public entertainment;
 - liquor and gambling; and
 - all other areas of general licensing.