

NOT CONFIDENTIAL – For public release

LICENSING AND APPEALS COMMITTEE
30 JUNE 2022

Report of the Director of Regulatory Services

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides the Committee with a brief summary of the work relating specifically to taxi and private hire licensing, undertaken by the Licensing Team during the last financial year.

Particular attention is drawn to actions taken following the implementation of the Council's revised Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy, which came into effect on 1st May 2018, when mandatory requirements relating to safeguarding awareness training and annual subscriptions to the Disclosure and Barring Service criminal record check update service were introduced.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the update report on taxi licensing related matters is noted; and future reports are submitted annually to the first meeting of this committee in the civic year.
- 2) That a progress report is submitted to the next meeting, on the implementation of the requirements of the Department for Transport's (DfT's) National Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Standards.

WARDS AFFECTED

All

STRATEGIC LINK

An effective licensing regime contributes towards the District Council's Place objective, in terms of keeping the Derbyshire Dales clean, green and safe.

1 TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY

1.1 Update Report

Members will recall that the Council's current Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy was approved by the Council and came into effect on 1st May 2018.

- 1.2 The Policy revisions aimed to raise existing standards and introduce greater consistency in dealing with applications. All applications are still considered individually on their own merits; but this is done in accordance with the Policy. The Licensing Policy is designed to guide the decision makers, who may depart from it where appropriate, as long as when they do so, full reasons are given.

- 1.3 The revised Policy introduced mandatory requirements for Licensed Drivers, which included:

Mandatory Safeguarding Awareness Training – Training to be attended by all drivers licensed at the time, and any new drivers no later than 6 months after being granted a licence. Refresher training is required every 3 years.

Mandatory Subscription to the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) – On Line Update Service for checking criminal records – all drivers must subscribe to the on-line update service when it is time for their criminal record check to be carried out.

Introduction of a Penalty Points Scheme for Licensed Drivers – The two objectives of the penalty point scheme are to improve the standards, safety and protection of the travelling public and to ensure that drivers are treated fairly and proportionately when they breach licence conditions.

Driver Knowledge Test – Applicants will be allowed 3 attempts at the Council’s Knowledge Test. Failure to pass after 3 tests will result in the applicant not being allowed to sit another test for at least 6 months after the date of the last failed test.

- 1.4 These policy requirements have been in place for the last 4 years, and have worked well, despite the 18-month disruption to the taxi and private hire licensing service, brought about by the pandemic.
- 1.5 Safeguarding Awareness Training Sessions were held earlier this year for 60+ private hire drivers (school SEN Contracts) licensed during the last 2 years. A number of Passenger Assistants also attended the training. Refresher training for those licensed drivers who attended training in 2018/19 and 2019/2020 is currently being arranged to take place during the next 2 months.

1.6 Local Licensing Activity

Application Type	Number of Applications Processed	
	2020/2021	2021/2022
Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence	30	71
Private Hire Vehicle Licence	5	13
Combined Hackney/PHV Driver Licence	16	36
PHV Driver only (SEN Contract)	17	35
Private Hire Operator Licence	2	3
Licensed Drivers attending Safeguarding Awareness Training Sessions	None.	65

1.7 Licensing and Appeals Sub-Committee – Taxi Hearings

During 2021-2022 only 1 application for a driver’s licence was referred to a meeting of the Licensing and Appeals Sub-Committee, to determine whether he/she was a fit and proper person to hold a Driver’s Licence (Badge), following disclosure of more than 5 points on their DVLA Licence. The driver retained their taxi driver licence but did so with a warning regarding future motoring offences.

1.8 Regulatory Services Service Plan

In 2021-22 one of the targets in the Regulatory Services Service Plan for the licensing service was to undertake 2 taxi enforcement operations. Usually these operations would be carried out with the District Council's vehicle testing officers, and colleagues from the police authority's traffic team.

During the last 18 months it has not been possible to undertake compliance or enforcement operations with the same level of resource as in previous year. Those conducted during 2021-2022, were carried out by the Licensing Team and took place mainly in the Dale Road area of Matlock, the focus of the Town's late night economy. A similar service plan target has been agreed for 2022/2023, when it is hoped that Officers can revert to a more joint-working approach, as was the case pre-pandemic.

1.9 The Department for Transport's (DfT's) National Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Standards

Members will recall that at the January meeting, a progress report on the implementation of the requirements of the Department for Transport's (DfT's) National Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Standards was considered.

Whilst work on this has been undertaken, it has not been possible to prepare an update report for this meeting. A detailed report will be submitted to the September meeting for Members' consideration.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 Legal

As this report is submitted for information, there are no legal implications associated with the report and the legal risk is therefore assessed as low.

3.2 Financial

The District Council Taxi Licensing service is not permitted to make a profit. The review of Licensing undertaken in 2016 recommended a series of 5% increases in taxi licensing fees over a period of 3 years, intended to enable the service to be cost neutral, with 2019/20 being the last year of these increases.

The costs and income of administering taxi and private hire licences during the last 3 financial years, are shown in the following table:

Taxi Licences	2019/20 Actual £	2020/21 Actual £	2021/22 Actual £	2022/23 Budget £
Direct Costs	41,906	39,368	50,551	31,210
Support Services	14,248	13,385	17,187	10,611
Income	-48,280	-43,001	-65,229	-48,077
Net Expenditure / (Income)	7,874	9,752	2,509	-6,256

NB: Support services are no longer allocated directly to services. Support service costs have been applied as a proportion of direct costs using a multiplier of 34% (based on 2016/17 actuals when more detailed records were maintained).

The financial risk arising directly from this report is assessed as low.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

5 CONTACT INFORMATION

Eileen Tierney, Licensing Manager, Tel: 01629 761374
email: eileen.tierney@derbyshiredales.gov.uk

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Description	Date / File
Records of applications stored in Licensing Software Systems – LalPac (archived) & M3 (NB: some licence types are currently paper format only)	RS/LN/M3/LalPac 2005 - on going

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None,