

<b>Report to:</b>	Licensing and Regulatory Committee	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 14 June 2021
<b>Subject:</b>	Taxi Licensing Performance Report 2020/21		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Highways and Public Protection	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	N	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	No
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

**Summary:**

To report the progress of the Taxi Licensing service during 2020/21.

**Recommendation(s):**

- (1) Note the contents of this report, and
- (2) Request that similar reports be brought on an annual basis
- (3) Approve accredited training providers to conduct knowledge tests on a temporary basis with the maximum fee chargeable set by the Council.

**Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

In order that the Licensing & Regulatory Committee can have an overview of the work carried out by the Taxi Licensing Service. To encourage applications for licences from locally based drivers

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:** (including any Risk Implications)

None

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

None

**(B) Capital Costs**

None

**Implications of the Proposals:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b>	
The cost of the service is wholly recovered from the ring-fenced Taxi Licensing Trade Account (Revenue Budget BD12).	
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	
<b>Equality Implications:</b> There are no equality implications	
<b>Climate Emergency Implications:</b>	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
There are no proposals in this report that that will alter any impact on climate change	

**Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable:
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services: Provide update on taxi licensing service provision.
Place – leadership and influencer:
Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

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**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

**(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6410/21.....) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4611/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

**(B) External Consultations**

None

**Implementation Date for the Decision**

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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**Appendices:**

There are no appendices to this report

**Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## **Background**

- 1.1 The Taxi Licensing Service comprises two distinct service elements:
  - a) The licensing function, administered through the Council's One Stop Shop (OSS); and
  - b) The 'Enforcement' function provided by the Environmental Health and Licensing Section.
- 1.2 Policy is determined and reviewed by the Council's Licensing & Regulatory Committee and client feedback provided by an established trade consultation regime.
- 1.3 The primary role of taxi licensing is to ensure the safety of the travelling public by ensuring the drivers, operators and vehicles meet standards of safety and good conduct.
- 1.4 To become a licensed driver in Sefton, all new applicants must satisfy the following;
  - A full driving licence (DVLA, EU or Northern Ireland only). A "fee-paid" driver record check is compulsory to check current entitlement to drive
  - A full vocational (DVLA Group II) medical examination obtained via the applicant's General Practitioner or a registered Doctor provided they have access to the applicant's medical records at the time of the examination. Medicals are currently required on first licensing, on reaching 45 years of age, then 55 years of age and on reaching 65 years of age and every 3 years thereafter.
  - A "fee-paid" satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) "Enhanced" disclosure. EU applicants may be permitted a short-term licence provided they can produce a "Certificate of Good Conduct" from their last country of residence until an "Enhanced" DBS certificate can be provided.
  - A VRQ level 2 qualification in 'Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire'.
  - It is a requirement of all new driver applications to take a 'Knowledge of Conditions Test' in addition to the VRQ qualification. Both must be obtained without the aid of an interpreter and the pass mark is 70%
  - Evidence that the applicant is legally entitled to work in the UK
- 1.5 All vehicles must obtain a 'certificate of compliance' from an approved testing station which is the equivalent of the current Department for Transport MOT plus extra checks on the condition and appearance of the vehicle.

## **2. Licence Numbers**

- 2.1 The table below shows a summary of licence numbers in force during 2020/21;

### Licence Totals 2020/21

Type	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20
Hackney Carriage Driver	328	328	327	328	329	325
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	271	271	271	271	271	271
Private Hire Driver	6,555	6,535	6,511	6,491	6,489	6,489
Private Hire Operator	116	112	112	106	103	100
Private Hire Vehicle	5,455	5,161	4,952	4,906	4,861	4,877
<b>Total</b>	12717	12,393	12,157	12084	12035	12039

Type	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Hackney Carriage Driver	324	313	314	316	314	304
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	271	271	271	271	271	271
Private Hire Driver	6,422	6,219	6,059	6,114	6,103	6,097
Private Hire Operator	98	90	81	82	80	79
Private Hire Vehicle	4,800	4,577	4,504	4,397	4,269	4,128
<b>Total</b>	11883	11433	11203	11146	11010	10852

- 2.2 The total number of licences in 2020/21 decreased by 1,865 over the year. During 2019/20, the total number of licences increased by 1,979.

### 3. Driver Licence Appeals, Breaches and Panel Decisions

- 3.1 Before the Council grants any driver licence, applicants must demonstrate they are a 'fit and proper person' to hold that licence. The Council requires all drivers (new and renewals) to obtain an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) report which will contain information about any criminal records including motoring convictions.
- 3.2 If the applicants report potentially breaches Council Policy, then the application will normally be refused. If an applicant appeals this decision, the first step in the decision-making process is for the Council to review the original decision made during the application process at the One Stop Shop.
- 3.3 A review of the original decision is considered by a panel of officers who review the application data and hear representations from the applicants. The appeals panel have received details of 17 cases during 2020/21 relating to new applicants for a range of convictions mainly involving violence, harassment, driving and drugs. Out of these cases, 7 were approved and 10 were refused.
- 3.4 The panel is also convened to consider reports and allegations of misconduct by existing licence holders. In 2020/21 the panel considered 38 cases which led to 26 revocations.
- 3.5 Typical reasons for revoking a current licence holder include the possession or supply of drugs, violence, sexual offences and driving offences including drink & drug driving.

#### **4. Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicle Checks**

4.1 Vehicle checks were temporarily suspended during the pandemic.

#### **5. Prosecutions**

5.1 The Council has been unable to carry out the usual targeted enforcement exercises due to coronavirus safe working procedures. Due to information received from Merseyside Police, there are currently two prosecutions pending relating to unlicensed and uninsured drivers.

#### **6. The Knowledge Test**

6.1 Council invigilated knowledge tests were suspended during the pandemic. New applicants that complete their training through an accredited training provider have been able to complete a knowledge test following their training with their approved training centre since January 2020. The current 'first test' pass rate is approximately 70%.

6.2 A number of applications have been received from new local applicants who are required to complete the knowledge test but the Council is currently unable to conduct these. In order to process these applications, it is proposed to temporarily allow approved accredited training providers to conduct knowledge tests for any new applicant subject to monitoring and a full review of the process by 1 September 2021.

6.3 Within the Merseyside area, some local authorities charge between £30 to £65 for such tests. It is therefore proposed to allow a fee to be charged for these tests with the Council setting the maximum amount with a suggested limit of £20 per test initially.

#### **7. Requests for Service**

7.1 The service dealt with 888 various requests for service, complaints or enquiries. Below is a summary of the subjects dealt with;

- 7 new operator enquiries & checks
- 21 exemption certificate applications & enquiries
- 339 general requests for advice
- 36 document irregularities
- 31 unlicensed activity complaints
- 47 driving style complaints
- 112 complaints regarding driver conduct or appearance
- 9 lost property enquiries
- 38 vehicle advice requests
- 4 overcharging complaints
- 56 vehicle accident reports
- 13 notification of convictions
- 132 public body enquiries
- 0 guide dog refusal complaints
- 5 solicitor enquiries

- 38 plate/livery enquiries

## **8. Impact of Coronavirus**

- 8.1 **Vehicles.** The One Stop Shop have continued to process all vehicle licence applications and renewals throughout the past year.
- 8.2 **Drivers.** Driver licences continue to be automatically renewed subject to certain requirements such as medicals, DBS, DVLA entitlement or any pending criminal matters. The OSS is now able to offer a limited number of appointments in order to process new or renewal DBS checks.
- 8.3 **Operators.** New operator applications are now being processed and any existing operators wishing to renew their licence should contact the OSS.

## **9. Summary & the Year Ahead**

- 9.1 Service provision will need to be modified due to coronavirus restrictions and work is underway in relation to online applications as well as appointment only interviews and a range of other modifications. The current priority for the council is to resume its normal services in the safest way possible and the trade will be advised of how we aim to achieve this.
- 9.2 Due to the ongoing uncertainty with long term licence numbers and the continuing process of collecting outstanding fees, it is difficult to currently produce an accurate summary for income in 2020/21.
- 9.3 The impact on the trade has been significant. The Council has processed £907,000 in grants to all eligible drivers residing within the Liverpool City Region and who were licensed with Sefton as a driver but the long term effects will not be known for some time.

## **10. RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- (1) Note the contents of this report, and
- (2) Request that similar reports be brought on an annual basis
- (3) Approve accredited training providers to conduct knowledge tests on a temporary basis with the maximum fee chargeable set by the Council.