

Report to:	Licensing and Regulatory Committee	Date of Meeting:	Monday 13 June 2022
Subject:	Taxi Licensing Performance Report 2021/22		
Report of:	Head of Highways and Public Protection	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	N	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To report the progress of the Taxi Licensing service during 2021/22.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Note the contents of this report, and
- (2) Request that similar reports be brought on an annual basis

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.

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

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The costs associated with producing Taxi Licensing Performance Reports will be met from existing service budgets.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
The cost of the service is wholly recovered from the ring-fenced Taxi Licensing Trade Account (Revenue Budget BD12).	
Legal Implications:	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
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

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6816/22.....) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5016/22....) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

N/A

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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. A 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 2021/22;

Licence Totals 2021/22

Type	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
Hackney Carriage Driver	302	303	302	299	295	296
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	271	271	271	271	271	271
Private Hire Driver	5,973	6,002	5,928	5,876	5,822	5,850
Private Hire Operator	66	62	67	69	68	70
Private Hire Vehicle	4,031	4,156	4,156	4,151	4,192	4,244
Total	10,643	10,794	10,724	10,666	10,648	10,731

Type	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
Hackney Carriage Driver	298	296	287	280	282	280
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	271	271	271	271	271	271
Private Hire Driver	5,885	5,860	5,707	5,564	5,608	5,521
Private Hire Operator	73	74	74	72	70	70
Private Hire Vehicle	4,273	4,250	4,222	4,292	4,428	4,441
Total	10,800	10,751	10,561	10,479	10,659	10,583

- 2.2 The total number of licences decreased by 60 over the year. During 2020/21, the total number of licences decreased by 1,865.

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 46 cases relating to new applicants for a range of convictions mainly relating to violence, harassment, driving and drugs. Out of these cases, 21 were approved and 25 were refused.
- 3.4 The panel is also convened to consider reports and allegations of misconduct by existing licence holders. In 2021/22 the panel considered 39 cases which led to 24 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 During 2021/22, the Taxi Licensing Unit carried out a total of 406 inspections – 399 of these were on private hire vehicles and 7 on hackney carriage vehicles. A total of 175 defect notices were issued which were mostly for bodywork condition.

5. Prosecutions

5.1 There is currently one prosecution pending relating to unlicensed and uninsured drivers.

6. The Knowledge Test

6.1 Council invigilated knowledge tests were suspended during the pandemic and have not been reinstated since. New applicants that complete their training through an accredited training provider have been able to complete a knowledge test with their approved training centre since January 2020.

7. Requests for Service

7.1 The service dealt with 1042 various requests for service, complaints or enquiries. The most common types of enquiries are as follows;

- new operator enquiries & checks
- exemption certificate applications & enquiries
- general requests for advice
- document irregularities
- unlicensed activity complaints
- driving style complaints
- complaints regarding driver conduct or appearance
- lost property enquiries
- vehicle advice requests
- overcharging complaints
- vehicle accident reports
- notification of convictions
- public body enquiries
- solicitor enquiries
- plate/livery enquiries

7.2 The total number of requests for service has increased by 154 over 2020/21 totals.

8. One Stop Shop

Total Number of Applications Per Month 2021 -22									
	Vehicles					Drivers			
	New	Renewal	Transfer	Variation (Vehicle Change)	Total Vehicles	New	Renewal	Total Drivers	
Apr-21	111	303	10	42	466	21	1214	1235	
May-21	77	216	8	26	327	29	835	864	
Jun-21	104	338	5	32	479	38	1266	1304	
Jul-21	127	417	3	39	586	27	523	550	
Aug-21	108	390	8	36	542	42	246	288	
Sep-21	115	459	4	37	615	43	263	306	
Oct-21	72	241	7	23	343	32	214	246	
Nov-21	83	374	5	25	487	44	369	413	
Dec-21	93	394	8	27	522	11	1034	1045	
Jan-22	154	500	7	53	714	3	421	424	
Feb-22	79	332	8	38	457	26	1132	1158	
Mar-22	109	348	5	31	493	40	370	410	
Total	1232	4312	78	409	6031	356	7887	8243	

8.1 **Vehicles.** The One Stop Shop (OSS) have continued to process all vehicle licence applications and renewals throughout the past year. This is all done electronically without the need to visit the OSS.

8.2 **Drivers.** Driver licences are now renewed following an appointment in the OSS. The OSS has also issued a total of 446 new driver applications since April 2021.

9. Summary & the Year Ahead

9.1 Service provision will need to be reviewed to adapt to demands on the service. Improvements to DBS checks and medicals have been introduced and extra resources placed in the OSS to deal with demand and reduce waiting times.

10 RECOMMENDATION(S):

- (1) Note the contents of this report, and
- (2) Request that similar reports be brought on an annual basis