

Report to:	Licensing and Regulatory Committee	Date of Meeting:	Monday 25 June 2018
Subject:	Taxi Licensing Performance Report 2017/18		
Report of:	Head of Regulation and Compliance	Wards Affected:	
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	N	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	N		

Summary:

To report the progress of the Taxi Licensing service during 2017/18.

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

None

(B) Capital Costs

None

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
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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.

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 Head of Corporate Resources (FD 5185/18) has been consulted and notes the report indicates no direct financial implications for the Council. The Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD.4409/18.) has 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

Contact Officer:	Mark Toohey
Telephone Number:	Tel: Ext 2274
Email Address:	mark.toohey@sefton.gov.uk

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 by Arvato through the Council's two One Stop Shops (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.

2. Licence Applications

- 2.1 For the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, a total of 9,107 driver and vehicle licence applications were dealt with. This figure is the total for all new, renewal or variations of licences for drivers and vehicles and represents an increase of approximately 43% from last year.
- 2.2 Licence applications year on year:

Month of	Total Number of Licence Applications	Total Number of Licence Applications	Total Number of Licence Applications	Change 2017/18 against 2016/17
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Apr	564	559	605	+46
May	518	504	662	+158
Jun	514	506	636	+130
Jul	566	504	637	+133
Aug	456	493	669	+176
Sep	575	530	705	+175
Oct	619	540	866	+326
Nov	626	525	899	+374
Dec	522	437	673	+236
Jan	644	548	826	+278
Feb	661	538	945	+407
Mar	664	693	984	+291
Total	6929	6377	9107	+2730

- 2.3 The 9107 licences processed can be broken down as follows;

Private Hire:	2017/18	2016/17
New driver licences	2211	1157
Renewal driver licences	1499	2548
New vehicle licences	1518	652
Renewal vehicle licences	2579	1418
Variations	596	(not recorded)

Hackney Carriage:

New driver licences	43	52
Renewal driver licences	157	131
New vehicle licences	0	0
Renewal vehicle licences	343	419
Variations	161	(not recorded)

2.4 The current number of live licences is as follows;

Private Hire Operators	98	88
Private Hire Drivers	4286	3425
Private Hire Vehicles	3747	3139
Hackney Carriage Drivers	340	354
Hackney Carriage Vehicles	271	271
Total number of live licences	8742	7277

Current licence numbers have increased by 1,465 since this time last year, an increase of around 17%.

3. Licence Appeals

- 3.1 Before the Council grants any driver licence, applicants have to 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 breaches Council Policy, then the application will normally be refused. If this happens the applicant has a right of appeal to a Magistrates Court.
- 3.3 The first step in the appeal process is for the Council to review the original decision made during the application process at the One Stop Shop. This appeal is considered by a panel of officers who review the application data and hear representations from the applicants. The appeals panel have considered 85 cases from new applicants and allowed 26 applications whilst refusing 47 and 4 cases were successfully appealed in the Magistrates Court.
- 3.4 The panel is also convened to consider reports and allegations of misconduct by existing licence holders. In 2017/18 the panel considered 66 cases in which 12

licences were allowed to remain in force, 9 were reinstated on appeal (after being revoked), 11 were suspended and 17 were revoked.

- 3.5 Typical reasons for refusing or revoking a licence include the possession or supply of drugs, theft, violence, offensive weapons, sexual offences and driving offences including drink & drug driving.

4. Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicle Checks

- 4.1 Vehicle checks are an integral part of the Council's enforcement regime. The checks are carried out to ensure vehicles are safe. At the time of every vehicle licence application or renewal, a satisfactory test certificate from a Council approved testing station has to accompany the application. Once a licence is granted, vehicles are subject to ongoing checks throughout the duration of the licence period.

- 4.2 During the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, a total of 488 vehicle inspections were carried out.

- 4.3 The outcomes of the checks can be summarised as follows:

- a) Hackney Carriage On Street Inspections / Pre-Planned Inspections
 - 60 vehicles inspected
 - 50% Fault Free – 24 vehicle defect notices issued, 2 stop notices issued.
- b) Private Hire On Street Inspections / Pre-Planned Inspections
 - 428 vehicles inspected
 - 50% Fault Free – 181 vehicle defect notices issued, 44 stop notices issued.

- 4.4 Lighting, bodywork and tyres remain the most common faults.

5. Prosecutions

- 5.1 During the year the Council carries out targeted enforcement exercises to deter rogue drivers from illegally plying for hire. Offenders are typically 'non-Sefton' hackney carriage vehicles plying for hire within Sefton or private hire vehicles taking a fare without a pre-booking. In 2017/18 there were 8 prosecutions compared with 6 prosecutions the previous year.

6. The Knowledge Test

- 6.1 An integral part of the licence application process is the knowledge test. The test is designed to test a driver's knowledge of all current conditions contained in the Council's handbook. The tables below illustrate the knowledge test provision in the two One Stop Shops.

- 6.2 Knowledge Tests at the Bootle One Stop Shop

	Total Spaces	Booked Test	Actual Attendance	Attended and failed	Attended and passed	Bootle % pass rate attendees
TOTALS	1870	1613	1482	591	883	60%

6.3 Knowledge Tests at the Southport One Stop Shop

	Total Spaces	Booked Test	Actual Attendance	Attended and failed	Attended and passed	Southport % pass rate attendees
TOTALS	1020	654	576	194	381	66%

6.4 The figures show a 24% increase in the pass rate in the Bootle OSS and a 26% increase in Southport OSS during 2017/18 although the test was changed to the handbook test, (and no longer a geographic routes based test) on 1 July 2017.

7. Process handling in the One Stop Shops

7.1 Taxi licensing clients utilise the Council's facilities in one of two ways; either by appointment or by simply dropping in and waiting to be seen. The tables below illustrate service provision in the two One Stop Shops.

7.2 Customer Contact at Bootle One Stop Shop

Appts Offered	Appts Booked	Appts Kept	Drop Ins Seen	Drop Ins Not Seen	Total Taxi Interviews
401	395	246	14335	0	14581

7.3 Customer Contact at Southport One Stop Shop

Appts Offered	Appts Booked	Appts Kept	Drop Ins Seen	Drop Ins Not seen	Total Drop Ins
496	151	106	2112	0	2218

7.4 The statistics show that the greatest demand remains at the Bootle One Stop Shop. Drop-in totals have increased from 10,421 to 16,447.

8. Summary & the Year Ahead

8.1 The proactive approach adopted by the Taxi Licensing Unit is the key factor in ensuring the quality of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and hence the safety of the travelling public. Joint operations with Merseyside Police and other local authorities will continue throughout the year.

8.2 The service will continue its 'plying for hire' exercises and will target vehicle defects by carrying out district vehicle checks.

8.3 The service faces challenges with the increasing number of applicants but has taken measures to ensure this does not impact on the taxi licensing or other services.

8.4 Further reports will be presented to the Licensing & Regulatory Committee detailing any service enhancements as they take place.