

<b>Report to:</b>	Licensing and Regulatory Committee	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 17 June 2019
<b>Subject:</b>	Taxi Licensing Performance Report 2018/19		
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Regulation and Compliance	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	
<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>	N		

**Summary:**

To report the progress of the Taxi Licensing service during 2018/19.

**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:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b>
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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.....) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD.....) 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, a total of 11/277 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 24% 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 2018/19 against 2017/18
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
Apr	559	605	874	269
May	504	662	922	260
Jun	506	636	861	225
Jul	504	637	876	239
Aug	493	669	897	228
Sep	530	705	842	137
Oct	540	866	1136	270
Nov	525	899	1113	214
Dec	437	673	734	61
Jan	548	826	1020	194
Feb	538	945	932	-13
Mar	693	984	1070	86
<b>Total</b>	<b>6377</b>	<b>9107</b>	<b>11277</b>	<b>2170</b>

2.3 The 11227 licences processed can be broken down as follows;

<b>Private Hire:</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
New driver licences	2211	3114
Renewal driver licences	1499	1545
New vehicle licences	1518	2287
Renewal vehicle licences	2579	2954
Variations	596	690

**Hackney Carriage:**

New driver licences	43	35
Renewal driver licences	157	145
New vehicle licences	0	0
Renewal vehicle licences	343	382
Variations	161	125

2.4 The current number of live licences is as follows;

Private Hire Operators	98	105
Private Hire Drivers	4286	5611
Private Hire Vehicles	3747	4802
Hackney Carriage Drivers	340	326
Hackney Carriage Vehicles	271	271
<b>Total number of live licences</b>	<b>8742</b>	<b>11115</b>

Current licence numbers have increased by 2,373 since this time last year, an increase of around 27%.

### **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 149 cases from new applicants and allowed 27 applications whilst refusing 105 and 1 case was 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 2018/19 the panel considered 68 cases in which 10

licences were allowed to remain in force, 1 was reinstated on appeal (after being revoked), 2 were suspended and 38 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, a total of 577 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
- 37 vehicles inspected
  - 70% Fault Free – 11 vehicle defect notices issued, 3 stop notices issued.
- b) Private Hire on Street Inspections / Pre-Planned Inspections
- 540 vehicles inspected
  - 57% Fault Free – 190 vehicle defect notices issued, 62 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 2018/19 there were 6 prosecutions compared with 8 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
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4112</b>	<b>4003</b>	<b>2965</b>	<b>1520</b>	<b>1428</b>	<b>48%</b>

### 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
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1328</b>	<b>1270</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>54%</b>

6.4 The figures show a decrease in the pass rate in the Bootle OSS (previously 60%) and a decrease in Southport OSS (previously 66%) during 2018/19.

## 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
<b>5123</b>	<b>4863</b>	<b>2930</b>	<b>16116</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19046</b>

### 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
<b>1359</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>2245</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2861</b>

7.4 The statistics show that the greatest demand remains at the Bootle One Stop Shop. Due to the increase in new application numbers an appointment only system was introduced hence the increase in appointments offered from last year (401 in Bootle and 496 in Southport).

## 8. Requests for Service

8.1 The service dealt with 1,056 various requests for service and complaints, below is a summary of the main areas officers dealt with;

- 10 new operator checks
- 13 exemption applications
- 73 requests for advice
- 45 document irregularities
- 34 unlicensed activity
- 87 driving style complaints

- 184 complaints regarding driver conduct or appearance
- 11 lost property enquiries
- 239 age related vehicle checks
- 24 overcharging complaints
- 96 vehicle accident reports

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

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 The service will continue its 'plying for hire' exercises and will target vehicle defects by carrying out district vehicle checks.
- 9.3 The service continues to 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.
- 9.4 Further reports will be presented to the Licensing & Regulatory Committee detailing any service enhancements as they take place.