

To: General Purposes Licensing Committee

Date: 14 June 2010

Item No:

Report of: Head of Environmental Development

**Title of Report: Update on Taxi Licensing Activity
April 2009 – March 2010**

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To inform Committee of the progress made by the Taxi Licensing Function under the between April 2009 and March 2010.

Report Approved by:

Finance: Gillian Chandler

Legal: Daniel Smith

Policy Framework:

Recommendation(s):

The Committee is recommended to:

(i) note the contents of the report, and

(ii) make comments and recommendations regarding the future work of the Taxi Licensing Function.

1. This report informs Committee of progress made by the Taxi Licensing Function under the duties of the Town & Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 between April 2009 – March 2010. Under Policy GN10 of the Statement of Licensing Policy, the Licensing Authority should report to the Committee on matters determined by the Head of Environmental Development with delegated authority, and it has been suggested that a similar procedure should be adopted by the Taxi Licensing Function.
2. The report covers data on service volumes; details of Taxi Licensing hearing decisions; decisions made under delegated powers; information on volumes of drivers and vehicles and enforcement activity.
3. The tables below provides data on licence applications received and processed during the period for April 2009 to March 2010.

Licences Issued	Total
Hackney Carriage Driver	334
Private Hire Driver	596
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	107
Private Hire Vehicle	546
Private Hire Operator	16

Actions Undertaken	Total
Licensing Hearings	23
Enforcement Actions	189
Number of Prosecutions	12
Complaints about Drivers / Vehicles	93

Applications Granted by the Licensing Authority

4. A hearing is not required where an application has been lawfully made and no adverse information pertaining to the “fitness” of a person or vehicle to be licensed by this Authority has been found. There were 930 driver, 653 vehicle, and 16 Operator licenses issued by the Head of Environmental Development under delegated authority.

Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings

5. When adverse information pertaining to the “fitness” of a person or vehicle to be licensed by this Authority has been found then the application is determined at a Sub-Committee Hearing.
6. During April 2009 – March 2010, 23 Hearings were held to determine the fitness of 5 Vehicle licenses, and 18 Driver licenses.

Appeals

7. The Taxi Licensing Authority received applications for appeal regarding 2 decisions made by the Committee.
8. One appeal was upheld.
9. One appeal was quashed.

Enforcement Activity

10. Between April 2009 and March 2010, the Licensing Team has issued:

- 40 verbal warnings
- 15 written warnings
- 1 final warning

The majority of warnings were issued due to breaches of driver / vehicle licence conditions. Other issues found were non-declaration of convictions, excessive penalty points on DVLA driving licences, use of mobile telephone whilst driving.

11. Between April 2009 and March 2010, 34 PACE interviews were carried out, either for the suspected offence of plying for hire, or other suspected criminal offences following information supplied by Thames Valley Police.

12. Resulting from the above PACE interviews were:

- 12 formal cautions for plying for hire
- 3 prosecutions for plying for hire

13. A total of 9 test purchase operations were carried out between April 2009 and March 2010. 36 vehicles were tested, which led to a number of the plying for hire warnings and cautions.

Nightsafe

14. The NightSafe initiative contributes to the taxi licensing objectives. This includes intelligence sharing and has led to the Taxi Licensing Enforcement Officers being able to view late night taxi activity in a number of locations by arrangement with the CCTV Manager.

Future Work

15. The Licensing and Gambling Acts Team and Taxi Licensing Team are being integrated so that staff will be able to cover many aspects of both functions. This will create a wider scope for enforcement action and administrative functions. A number of changes are being considered to improve the administrative process which will benefit both customers and staff:

- Reminder letters will be sent to vehicle licence holders 2 months prior to the renewal date of the licence.
- Reminder letters will be sent to driver licence holders 3 months prior to the renewal date of the licence.
- An appointment system will be put in place to accommodate each

application for renewal, thus providing every licence holder with a timely and orderly manner in which to produce their documents and payment, and provide the Team Support Officers with a structured timeframe to produce the renewed licences, badges, plates, submission of DVLA mandates and CRB mandates. Over time this will reduce the number of drivers simply turning up at Ramsay House requiring an urgent renewal of their vehicle licence and plates, and should lead to drivers taking a more responsible approach within the requirements of their profession.

- All fees will be paid at the appointment stage at reception. This will relieve the reception area of frequency in which taxi drivers gather at Ramsay House. It will be at the discretion of this Authority as to whether to refund any vehicle or driver not deemed fit or proper for the purposes of renewal.
 - In order to obtain their new paper licence and plates for the renewal of the vehicle licence, licensees will be able to collect their plates and licence from reception on Friday afternoons. In order to prevent fraud, the plates currently attached to the vehicle must be returned to reception before the new plates are handed out.
 - Inspections of the Taxi ranks throughout the District will take place weekly. An inspection sheet has been devised and passed on to the Enforcement Officers who will be able to check on the visual condition and general safety of any vehicle that they see. They will also be able to ensure that any driver seen is adhering to the conditions of his drivers licence.
16. The Taxi Newsletter will inform licence holders of any changes in order to help facilitate the implementation of the new system.
17. At a meeting with the Trade Association representatives on 13 May 2010, the above proposed changes were welcomed without reservation.

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Background papers:
Version: 1.0