

**To:** General Purposes Licensing Committee

**Date:** 13 October 2010 **Item No:**

**Report of:** Head of Environmental Development

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

### **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To inform Committee of the progress made by the Taxi Licensing Function between April 2010 and August 2010.

**Report Approved by:**

**Finance:** (Verbal Report at Meeting)

**Legal:** Daniel Smith

**Policy Framework:** Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life

**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 2010 – August 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. There are no financial requirements for consideration contained within this report.
3. 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.

4. The tables below provides data on licence applications received and processed during the period for April 2010 to August 2010.

<b>Licences Issued</b>	<b>Total</b>
Hackney Carriage Driver	145
Private Hire Driver	312
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	48
Private Hire Vehicle	282
Private Hire Operator	7

<b>Actions Undertaken</b>	<b>Total</b>
Licensing Hearings	0
Enforcement Actions	72
Number of Prosecutions	1
Complaints about Drivers / Vehicles	49

#### **Applications Granted by the Licensing Authority**

5. 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 have been 457 driver, 330 vehicle, and 7 Operator licenses issued by the Head of Environmental Development under delegated authority during the period April 2010 – August 2010.

#### **Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings**

6. 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.
7. During April 2010 – August 2010, 1 Hearing was held to determine the fitness of 2 vehicles and 1 person.

#### **Appeals**

8. The Taxi Licensing Authority did not receive any applications for appeal regarding decisions made by the Committee.

## **Enforcement Activity**

9. Between April 2010 and August 2010, the Licensing Team has issued:

- 1 verbal warnings
- 1 written warning
- 0 final warnings
- 35 advisory letters

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.

10. An “advisory” letter is to help educate licensed drivers who are new to the responsibilities of being a member of the taxi fraternity, or when there is some element of reasonable doubt between the version of events reported by the complainant and the licensed driver.
11. A “warning” is given when the complaint and / or offence has been proved against the licensee, and is deemed to either be serious enough to warrant enforcement action of a higher level than an “advisory” letter, or the pattern of conduct by the licensee over any period of time has resulted in a “warning” being the next procedural level of action required.
12. Members should note that whilst the above may illustrate the procedures that the Taxi Licensing Team follow, should a matter come to light that gives rise to a higher level of concern to Officers, then the issue can be presented to the Licensing Sub-Committee for determination, that may result in the suspension or revocation of the licence.
13. Between April 2010 and August 2010, 12 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.
14. Resulting from the above PACE interviews were:
- 1 verbal warning for unprofessional behaviour of a driver
  - 1 written warning for plying for hire
  - 2 drivers suspended for plying for hire
15. No test purchase operations were carried out between April 2010 and August 2010.

## **Nightsafe**

16. 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. This will

benefit the enforcement of licensed drivers and vehicles as it will provide a more widespread view of unprofessional conduct by the licensed trade in the City at night, and a more accurate picture of the level of enforcement required to combat this.

17. Meetings with the CCTV Manager have taken place, and dates have been set for the Taxi Enforcement Officer to attend their premises.

### **Future Work**

18. 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 improve service cover and create a wider scope for enforcement action and administrative functions. A number of changes have been considered to improve the administrative process which will benefit both customers and staff and were reported on at the previous meeting of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee.
19. These changes will be implemented in stages over the next 12 months, and started recently with Reminder Letters being issued to drivers, proprietors and operators informing them of the expiry date of their current licence and what they must do in order to renew their licence in a timely and organized manner.
20. Further stages to be phased in will include a “one-stop-shop” facility for payments and appointments in order to provide a transparent, efficient and effective service to both the trade and the public, and in time for the Licensing Team to meet with the timetable of Offices For The Future, and in keeping with the objectives of the Service Transformation Plan and Corporate Plan.
21. The procedures for making new applications and renewal applications will be reviewed in order to reduce the administrative work carried out by the team, and put more emphasis on the licensee to ensure accuracy with their application and reduce the strain put on the service by the current procedures.
18. Inspections of the Taxi ranks throughout the City 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.
19. Night-time enforcement duties will be more accountable in future, and approval for each targeted area must be sought from either the Licensing Team Leader or the Licensing and Development Service Manager to ensure consistency in our approach and recording of incidents.
20. The Taxi Newsletter will inform licence holders of all further procedural changes in order to help facilitate the implementation of the new system.

These Newsletters are produced quarterly and are available to Members if required.

21. The use of CCTV in licensed vehicles is being examined, and a Report will be submitted to the General Purposes Licensing Committee in due course.
22. The Coalition Government's proposals to "rebalance the Licensing Act 2003" have been responded to by Oxford City Council. If the Government initiates some of its proposals in 2012, it may lead to a source of funding to provide Taxi Marshals at certain hours at ranks in the City Centre.

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**Background papers:**  
**Version: 1.0**