

To: GENERAL PURPOSES LICENSING COMMITTEE

Date: 15 June 2009 **Item No:** 5

Report of: Head of Environmental Development

Title of Report: Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Service Plan and Enforcement Plan

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To seek Committee's approval of the Taxi Licensing and Private Hire Service and Enforcement Activity Plans.

Report Approved by:

Finance: Anna Winship
Legal: Daniel Smith

Policy Framework:
Corporate Plan
Delimitation of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Number

Recommendation(s):

Committee is requested to approve the Licensing and Private Hire Service Plan and the Enforcement Activity Plan as set out in this report.

Introduction

1. This report is in response to the internal audit of the private hire and hackney carriage licensing service carried out by KPMG in 2008. The recommendations of the audit report included the development of a service plan and an enforcement activity plan for the taxi and private hire licensing functions. The purpose of this report is to present these plans for committee's comments and approval.

Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Service Plan

1. The private hire and taxi licensing functions sits within the Licensing Team in the Licensing and Development Division of Environmental Development. Environmental Development is a new department arising out of the Council-wide restructuring plan. It came into being during the close of the 2008/9 financial year. It comprises 4 divisions, Environmental Sustainability, Environmental Control, Health Development, and Licensing and Development.

Objectives of the Service

2. To protect public safety and ensure awareness of the licensing requirements through the enforcement of legislation and provision of advice and information by:
 - fulfilling the Council's statutory duties under relevant legislation e.g. Town Police Clauses Acts 1847 and 1889, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 etc,
 - responding to public complaints and other requests for service and investigating within service standards,
 - the provision of advice and information, and
 - working in partnership and cooperation with the Police, VOSA, Trading Standards, Criminal Records Bureau, Border and Immigration Agency, Oxford Safer Communities Partnership, City of Oxford Licensed Taxi Association and Oxford Private Hire Association

Links to Corporate and Departmental Objectives and Plans

3. The Council produces a Corporate Plan annually which sets out the Council's 6 strategic priorities of which 3 cover the taxi licensing service:
 - Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Stronger and more inclusive communities
 - Transform Oxford City Council by improving value for money and service performance
4. The Environmental Development Department produces an Annual Service Transformation Plan which encompasses the work of 4 divisions including the Licensing and Development Division. Service Plans are produced by each division and are key to achieving effective performance management and are used to demonstrate improvement and the achievement of objectives and performance targets.

Delegation of Responsibilities

5. Full Council sets policies on taxi and private hire and other vehicle licensing.
6. The General Purposes Licensing Committee:
 - recommends and reviews policies on taxi and private hire and other vehicle licensing
 - sets and reviews licence fees
7. The General Purposes Licensing Committee appoints a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Sub-Committee to deal with cases concerning applicants for or holders of taxi, private hire or other drivers or vehicle licences brought to the sub-committee by officers. The Sub-Committee has the power to:
 - decide taxi and private hire and other vehicle, driver and operator licence applications when the applicant has a conviction and the relevant service head has concerns about the nature of the offence or the applicant or the vehicle may not be suitable for some other reason
 - withdraw and suspend licences for taxis and private hire and other vehicles and their drivers and operators
8. The Head of Environmental Development does everything else.

Resources

9. Financial

	Projected Gross Expenditure	Projected Gross Income
Budget 2009/10	£227,202	£227,202

10. Staffing

Total Resources	4.1 FTE
Licensing and Development Service Manager (part of)	0.2 FTE
Licensing Team Leader (part of)	0.4 FTE
Senior Taxi Licensing Officer	1.0 FTE
Taxi Licensing Enforcement Officer	1.0 FTE
Team Support Officer	1.0 FTE
Team Support Officer (part of)	0.5 FTE

Demands on the Service

11. The anticipated demand on the service in 2009/10 based on 2008/9 figures is:

Hackney Carriage Licences	116
Private Hire Vehicle Licences	482
Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Drivers Licences (dual licence)	319
Private Hire Drivers Licences	504
Private Hire Operators Licences	17
New Applicant Interviews (not all will be licenced)	211
Referrals to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Sub-Committee	9
Proactive Inspections with Police	10
Enforcement Files	299
Enforcement Actions	16
• Prosecutions	(5)
• Formal Cautions	(11)
Suspended Licences	tbc
Revoked Licences	tbc
Service Requests (complaints about drivers, vehicles or operators)	89

Performance Targets

Driver Application	% issued within 5 working days of completed application
Driver Renewal	% issued within 5 working days of completed application
Vehicle Application	% issued within 5 working days of completed application
Vehicle Renewal	% issued within 5 working days of completed application
Operator Application	% issued within 5 working days of completed application
Operator Renewal	% issued within 5 working days of completed application
Reminder letter (CRB/medicals)	% within 60 days prior to due date
Initial response to service requests	% within 5 working days

Key Actions for 2009/10

- Recruit to fill vacancies in the Licensing Team
- Integrate the taxi licensing and other licensing functions into one team
- Carry out customer satisfaction for business contacts (NI 162 - part of departmental programme)
- Carry out an "unmet demand survey" on hackney carriage numbers and review delimitation
- Review licence fees

- Investigate mobile working to improve enforcement and increase time the enforcement officer spends on the district
- Review and update all procedures to ensure they meet best practice and legislative guidelines
- Report to General Purposes Licensing Committee on taxi and private hire licensing activity twice a year (April - September and October - March)
- Respond to the Department for Transport Consultation on revisions to the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing: Best Practice Guidance
- Investigate the use of CCTV cameras in taxis and private hire vehicles
- Respond to the Department for Transport's Consultation on improving access to taxis for disabled people
- Investigate the adoption of a recognisable national driver training scheme

APPENDIX B

Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Proactive Enforcement Plan

Detailed programmes are exempt under access to information as they would reveal when the Council proposes to carry out enforcement for the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Activity	Frequency
Multi-Agency operations with Police, VOSA <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Automatic number plate recognition checks from set location- Mobile checks e.g. vehicles stopped when actively mobile- vehicles pulled over and checked for vehicle roadworthiness, adherence to licence conditions etc and driver being licensed, display of badge, insurance, DVLA licence etc	4 times a year
On Street Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none">- - overt checks e.g. vehicle roadworthiness, adherence to licence conditions etc and driver being licensed, display of badge, insurance etc- - overt checks e.g observation of plying for hire	4 times per month
Test purchase operations checking private hire vehicles plying for hire	4 operations per annum
Operator checks <ul style="list-style-type: none">- visit to operators base to check records	1 visit annually to each operator
Insurance checks <ul style="list-style-type: none">- checks of licensing records to confirm all currently licensed vehicles are correctly insured	Monthly exception report from Lalpac licensing database
Certificates of Compliance (MOT substitute) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- checks of licensing records to confirm continuity- checks carried out to establish if vehicle worked without a valid certificate- record of failures is kept	Monthly exception report from Lalpac licensing database

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Background papers:

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