

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE

ORIGINATING SECTION: PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE

REPORT TO : LICENSING COMMITTEE 18 September 2017

TITLE : UPDATE ON THE WORK OF PUBLIC PROTECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the work of the Council's Public Protection and Environmental Health Service (PPS) where there is a connection with businesses and persons who require a licence from the Council. This report covers the time period June to August 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That members note the report.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 Taxi Safety Operations

A taxi safety operation took place on Friday 16th June at the railway station in Blackburn. In total 28 vehicles were inspected and the drivers had their private hire or hackney carriage driver's licences checked.

3.2 Under Age Sales Test Purchase Operation

An under age sales alcohol test purchasing operation took place on 19th July 2017 during which 14 off-licensed premises were tested. On all occasions the businesses refused to sell the alcohol to the under 18 year old volunteers.

3.3 Prosecution for under age sale of alcohol

On 20 June the owner of a general store appeared at Blackburn Magistrates court and was fined a total of £185 (fine, costs and victim surcharge). The case was taken because in October 2016 four cans of lager were sold to an underage volunteer. The volunteer was not challenged about his age nor any identification asked for. This is a repeat offence so the alcohol licence for the premises is in the process of being reviewed.

3.4 Safeguarding Training for taxi drivers

Safeguarding training is now mandatory for all hackney carriage and private hire drivers in Blackburn with Darwen. A series of training sessions will be held in September and is being provided by the Safeguarding Team. The aim is to have all Blackburn with Darwen's drivers having completed this course by the end of the financial year.

3.5 Elton John concert at Ewood Park

Staff from across the Public Protection Service were involved in the Elton John concert at Ewood Park on 10th June 2017. Staff attended meetings for planning the event and on the day of the concert were present both inside and outside of the stadium. Responsibilities included:

- To ensure that the event took place safely especially with regard to crowd safety, movement and stewarding.
- To minimise the noise disturbance to people who live near to the stadium

- To ensure the event was compliant with the conditions on the Alcohol/Entertainment licence.
- To ensure merchandise was not counterfeit and came up to the correct safety standards.

3.6 Routine work carried out

The following table provides some of the key figures on work carried out by members of staff working in the Licensing Team from 1 June – 31 August 2017.

| | |
|--|------------|
| Vehicle licences processed | 348 |
| Driver licences processed | 95 |
| Licensing Act licences processed | 59 |
| Visits to new DPSs | 35 |
| Inspections of premises/vehicles carried out | 128 |

3.7 Update on taxi penalty point scheme

The Blackburn with Darwen penalty point scheme has been in place since January 2016. It was introduced to encourage compliance with hackney carriage and private hire vehicle and driver licence conditions. In summary, where problems are found which are not serious enough to warrant prosecution, informal “points” are issued to the licence holder. The number of points varies depending on the problem found (ranging from 5 to 10). Should a licence holder reach a threshold of 20 points in a rolling 12 month period they will be referred to a general licensing sub-committee for a review.

Between January 2016 and the end of August 2017 54 sets of points have been issued. 31 for vehicle faults (in 2016 there were 798 vehicles licensed in Blackburn with Darwen) and 23 for driver licence issues (in 2016 there were 970 drivers licensed). 5 were to private hire operators in relation to company vehicle faults. 3 licence holders have appealed using the internal appeal process – in all cases the appeal was dismissed. 1 private hire operator reached the threshold for referring to committee for review. The operator was able to demonstrate the company had addressed the issues of concern thus removing the necessity to bring before committee.

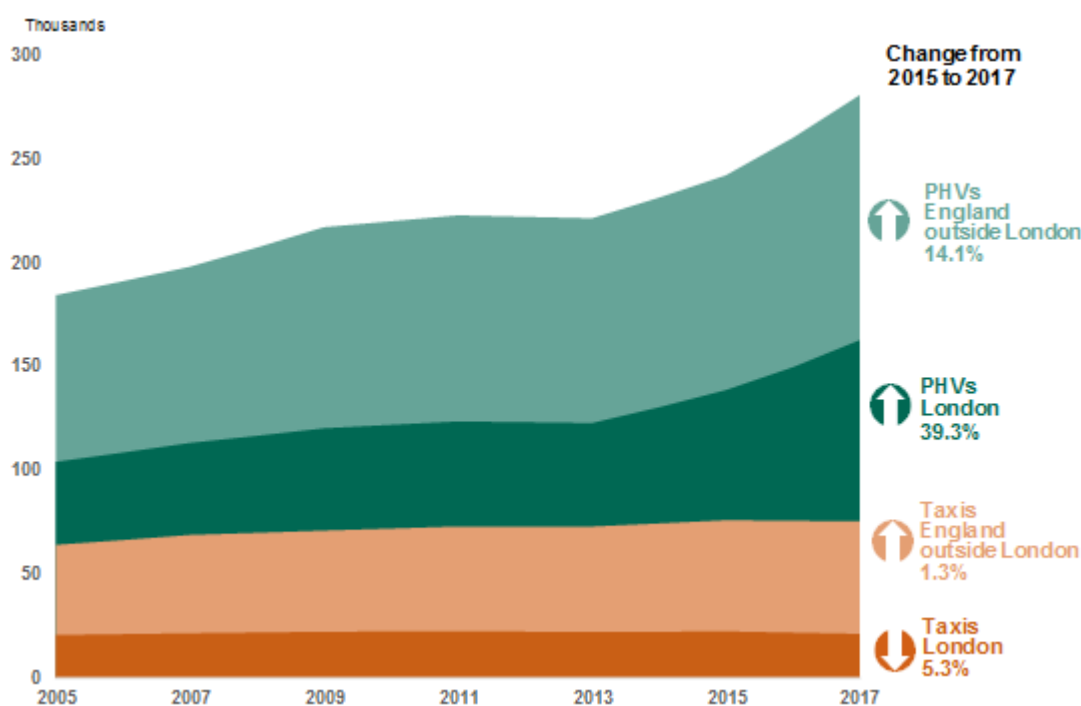
During this time there has been an improvement seen in the condition of vehicles stopped during the evening taxi safety operations.

3.8 Department for Transport licensing survey 2017

The Department for Transport taxi and private hire vehicle licensing survey 2017 was published in early September. The full report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicles-statistics-england-2017>

Of note is a general trend in the increase in the number of licenced hackney carriages and private hire vehicles - as illustrated in the graph below. Figures for Blackburn with Darwen mirror this pattern. Vehicle licence numbers published in the past 2 unmet demand surveys show that in 2013 there were 659 PHVs and in 2016 728. The number of hackney carriage vehicles has remained the same at 70.



4. RATIONALE

To inform members of the Licensing committee about the key work carried out by staff working within the Council's Public Protection and Environmental Health Team where there is a connection with businesses and people needing a licence from the Council.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None

9. CONSULTATIONS

None

10. CONTACT OFFICER

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