

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND OPERATIONS

ORIGINATING SECTION: PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE

REPORT TO : LICENSING COMMITTEE 26 April 2022

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. It also provides an update for members on national policy changes and proposals affecting licencing work.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That members note the report.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 Taxi safety operation

In March a joint operation was undertaken with Licensing, Trading Standards and Environmental Crime Officers and the Police.

6 private hire vehicles licensed by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council were stopped. The vehicles were given road side safety inspections and checks made that correct licences were in place. No problems were identified.

3.2 Officer revocation

A taxi driver has had his licence revoked using officer powers following notification by the Police of his potential involvement in an ongoing fraud investigation.

3.3 Appeal results

Since the last Licensing Committee 2 appeals against the decisions of general licensing sub-committees to revoke private hire vehicle driver licences have been concluded. In both cases the Magistrates Court agreed with the decision made by the Licensing Sub-Committee.

3.4 Blackburn with Darwen Taxi Forum meeting

At February's meeting of the Taxi Forum the Council's arrangements for MOT testing of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles and driver training and assessment were discussed.

3.5 Routine work carried out

The following table provides some figures on some of the key work carried out from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Vehicle licences processed – hackney carriage and private hire	1600
Driver licences processed – new and renewal applications	425
Licensing Act licences processed These are new licences, variations to existing licences and changes to designated premises supervisor	74
Temporary Event Notices processed	90
Animal Welfare Licences processed	24
Street trader	18

3.6 National Issues

The Department for Transport (DfT) issues best practice guidance on taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing. This has recently been updated to take into account stakeholder views and changes in the way the sector operates. DfT are currently consulting on the proposed changes. The consultation ends on 20 June 2022. A response will be made on behalf of the Licensing Authority.

The main areas on taxi and private hire licensing which the DfT are seeking views on are:

- Driver licensing – additional assessments above standard driving licence
- Vocational training and assessment of drivers
- Vehicles with tinted windows
- Vehicle identification and signage
- Vehicle age limits

The link to the consultation is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-best-practice-guidance>

3.7 Levelling up the UK

The Government's published levelling up document includes the following paragraph at p.211 :-

“The UK Government will also explore transferring control of taxi and private hire vehicle licensing to both combined authorities and upper-tier authorities. Taxis and private hire vehicles are a key part of local transport systems, so this would allow LTAs to fully integrate these modes into their Local Transport Plans.”

As a unitary council authority providing both upper and lower tier functions, Blackburn with Darwen is already the regulator for the private hire and hackney carriage trade in the Borough. However, if the Government pursue this option there would be serious implications for the 11 remaining Lancashire district councils and the 10 Manchester councils that make up the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, as they would be reduced to 2 licensing authorities for the purpose of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing functions.

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 Service where there is a connection with businesses and people needing a licence from the Council. It also provides an update on some national licensing issues.

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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