

Wards Affected:*All Wards***Taxi Licensing Audit Report and Further Service Improvements**

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Executive Summary

An internal audit report in November 2014 stated that the Taxi Licensing Service performance was “weak”. A follow up internal audit report in October 2015 has declared that the service is now “good”. This report includes the audit reports and details the additional improvements that have been made in the last year.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the report be noted.

2. Issues

2.1 Internal audit have 4 levels of classification, “weak”, “limited”, “satisfactory” and “good”. In November 2014 internal audit classed the Taxi Licensing Service (TLS) as “weak”. The follow up audit published in November 2015 has recognised significant improvements in the service that has seen it jump from the lowest standard to the highest. (Annex A and B)

2.2 Over the past year Officers have implemented a number of measures to ensure that the findings of the 2014 audit report were acted upon and

2.3 A number of other initiatives have been implemented to further improve the service. A summary of the changes made in the last year are as follows:

1. The Council adopted its Hackney Carriage and Private Hire (Taxi) Policy in 2014 and has kept this under review throughout the last year in order to ensure that it is effective and robust. The Committee are already aware of the aspects of the Policy and procedures that have been updated at previous Committees.
2. 993 drivers licensed by the Council had their criminal records checked as part of the “DBS project”. This resulted in the criminal record of all drivers being considered. Where appropriate revocations and suspensions have occurred.
3. All applications for licences now involve 2 members of staff. Applicants for driver licences who do have any form of conviction, endorsement, caution or other enforcement action (unless stated as acceptable within the Policy such as a threshold of penalty points) are considered by the

Head of Service and either granted, refused or if necessary referred to a sub-committee.

4. Taxi Forums are held regularly as public meetings albeit predominantly with members of the Trade.
5. Members and Officers attended a training course on Taxi licensing in the summer of 2015 conducted by Jim Button.
6. All paper files have been scanned electronically and all licence holders are entered onto the APP Flare database system.
7. The APP Flare computer system has been cleansed of all expired, incomplete and duplicate entries.
8. The APP Flare computer system is now accurate and presents a correct picture of all those licensed by the Council.
9. The APP Flare computer system can now be used to run a number of reports to enable officers to interrogate the system. This allows monthly reporting and monitoring of all elements of the application and/or renewal processes.
10. Public registers are now being produced on a monthly basis and are published on the Council website.
11. All documentation relevant to an application is scanned onto the computer system and retained for the life of a licence and then for an appropriate period thereafter in line with data protection guidance and the Council's retention policy.
12. Changes to the internal working procedures and the improved accuracy of APP Flare has resulted in improved and robust case management. In 2014 the work flow of the business support staff was dictated by applicants and licence holders but this has now been reversed
13. The procedure for applying for vehicle licences has been amended to ensure the Council fulfils its legislative duties and only grants a licence and provides a plate once the full administrative process has been completed.
14. All vehicle licences are guaranteed to be processed and determined within 3 working days. The majority are done within 1 working day.
15. The procedure for granting plate exemptions to licensed vehicles has been made more effective by requiring evidence to be provided by the applicant to justify the exemption.
16. All application forms have been revised to ensure that relevant information is provided to the Council.
17. The compliance of licence holders is now managed more effectively by ensuring records are kept up to date.

18. The procedure for applying for driver licences has been revised to place responsibility for the application and compliance on the driver and ensure the service area uses its time more efficiently. This has resulted in the removal of the appointment system previously conducted by business support staff.
19. Drivers now know that they are responsible for completing and providing applications which has resulted in the reduction of the number of temporary badges being issued
20. Additional elements have been introduced to the induction course including disability awareness training to ensure that non-compliance with the Council's conditions of licence are reduced.

3. Options

3.1 To note the report.

4. Implications

4.1 Policy

None.

4.2 Resource and Risk

N	Capital	N	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

4.3 Carbon and Energy Management

None

4.4 Legal

Other Implications

N	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	N	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers:

Annex A Taxi Licensing Investigation Final Follow Up

Annex B E257_16 Taxi Licensing Final Report