

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

LICENSING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Licensing & Regulatory Committee** held at Conference Room 1 - County Hall on Wednesday, 23 August 2023 at 1:30 pm.

PRESENT

C Humphrey (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

J Beynon
E Chicken
C Hardy
K Parry
A Sharp

T Cessford
B Gallacher
S Lee
C Seymour
A Wallace

OFFICERS

H Bowers
M Bulman
T Hardy

Democratic Services Officer
Solicitor
Licensing Manager

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED that the Membership and Terms of Reference for the Licensing & Regulatory Committee as agreed by Council at the meeting on 17 May 2023 be noted.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Foster, Hutchinson and Swinbank.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee held on Wednesday 26 April 2023, as circulated be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4 SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Licensing and Regulatory Subcommittee held on Thursday, 27 April 2023, be received for information.

Ch.'s Initials.....

5 REPORTS OF THE HEAD OF PUBLIC PROTECTION

5.1 Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022

Members were updated on the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022 and were asked to note the report.

Tasmin Hardy, Licensing Manager informed members that as from 31 May 2022, any licensing authority in England held information about a taxi or private hire vehicle driver licensed by another authority relative to safeguarding or road safety concerns, must be shared with the authority that issued that driver's licence.

A software system held details of any driver who had been revoked or suspended by another authority.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

5.2 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing – Authorised Testing Stations

Members were reminded of issues which had arisen at the Berwick testing station where the brake roller needed to be replaced and the garage closed for 8 weeks. The remaining garages had struggled to accommodate vehicles requiring a test and the matter was brought to the Licensing & Regulatory Committee on 15 February 2023, where it had been agreed to authorise 2 independent garages on a temporary basis.

Approval was sought from members to delegate authority to officers to approve six garages within Northumberland to conduct the testing and inspection of vehicles where the current NCC garages were unable to provide provision within an acceptable timescale.

In discussion, members raised the following:

- The mileage and age of vehicles
- No testing station at Berwick or the borders and asked if this could be considered as high priority.
- Concern around MOT stations and lead in times
- Capacity issues, especially in the north of the county
- The number of garages in the recommendations
- Consultation with garages and drivers
- An investigation for a suitable garage in the north of the county and a report be brought back to the committee.

The Licensing Manager informed members that if a vehicle exceeded 200,000 miles or was over 5 years old, it would need to be tested more often and only at an NCC authorised garage.

She had been assured that garages could cope with demand. At the present time there was no officer capacity to conduct a consultation or review of garages.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Councillor Cessford moved acceptance of the recommendation with an amendment to some of the wording – that members delegate to officers authority to approve garages as may be required within Northumberland to conduct the testing and inspection of vehicles where officers decided that NCC garages are unable to provide adequate provision within an acceptable timescale. This was seconded by Councillor Gallacher.

In debating the item, the Licensing Manager advised members that Licensing Officers would inspect the garages and report back and herself and the Head of Public Protection would approve.

A vote was taken on the proposal to accept the recommendation with the amendments, which was unanimously agreed. It was therefore:-

RESOLVED that authority be delegated to officers to approve garages as may be required within Northumberland to conduct the testing and inspection of vehicles where officers decide that NCC garages are unable to provide adequate provision within an acceptable timescale.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory on Tuesday 24 October 2023, be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Ch.'s Initials.....