



Northumberland

County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Heather Bowers

Email:

Heather.Bowers@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 07873 700 976

Date: 6 February 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **LICENSING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE** to be held in **CONFERENCE ROOM 1 - COUNTY HALL** on **WEDNESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2024** at **1.30 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Dr H Paterson
Chief Executive

To Licensing & Regulatory Committee members as follows:-

J Beynon, T Cessford, E Chicken, J Foster, B Gallacher, C Hardy, C Humphrey (Chair), S Lee, K Parry, C Seymour (Vice-Chair), A Sharp, M Swinbank, A Wallace and JI Hutchinson



Dr H Paterson Chief Executive
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AGENDA

PART I

It is expected that the matters included in this part of the agenda will be dealt with in public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES

(Pages 1
- 4)

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee held on Wednesday 23 August 2023, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required where a matter arises at a meeting;

Which **directly relates to** Disclosable Pecuniary Interest ('DPI') as set out in Appendix B, Table 1 of the Code of Conduct, to disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote and not to remain in room. Where members have a DPI or if the matter concerns an executive function and is being considered by a Cabinet Member with a DPI they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with the matter.

Which **directly relates to** the financial interest or well being of a Other Registrable Interest as set out in Appendix B, Table 2 of the Code of Conduct to disclose the interest and only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain the room.

Which **directly relates to** their financial interest or well-being (and is not DPI) or the financial well being of a relative or close associate, to declare the interest and members may only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak. Otherwise, the member must not take part in discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.

Which **affects** the financial well-being of the member, a relative or close associate or a body included under the Other Registrable Interests column in Table 2, to disclose the interest and apply the test set out at paragraph 9 of Appendix B before deciding whether they may remain in the meeting.

Where Members have or a Cabinet Member has an Other Registerable Interest or Non Registerable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

NB Any member needing clarification must contact monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk. Members are referred to the Code of Conduct which contains the matters above in full. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

4. FIRE EXTINGUISHER TRAINING REQUIREMENT FOR TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS (Pages 5 - 10)

To seek approval for the Licensing Service to consult with licence holders to amend conditions of application for hackney carriage and private hire driver licences to include requirement for training in the use of fire extinguishers.

5. HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF REVIEW (Pages 11 - 16)

To seek the views of Members on whether there should be a review of the current hackney carriage tariff. The tariff was last reviewed in February 2023 with an agreement to undertake a review of the tariff within one year.

6. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE TESTING UPDATE (Pages 17 - 20)

To provide an update to Members on the implementation of the revised hackney carriage and private hire policy to allow exemptions in agreed circumstances to allow vehicles to be tested by garages other than those operated by Northumberland County Council.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair, should, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

- Declare it and give details of its nature before the matter is discussed or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.
- Complete this sheet and pass it to the Democratic Services Officer.

Name:		Date of meeting:	
Meeting:			
Item to which your interest relates:			
Nature of Interest i.e. either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Table 1 of Appendix B to the Code of Conduct, Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest (as defined by Appendix B to Code of Conduct) (please give details):			
Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?		Yes - <input type="checkbox"/>	No - <input type="checkbox"/>

Registering Interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest.

Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in **Table 1**) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2** you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied
9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well- being:
- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Licensing and Regulatory Committee** held on Wednesday, 23 August 2023 at 1:30 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor C Humphrey
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

J Beynon
T Cessford
E Chicken
B Gallacher
C Hardy

S Lee
K Parry
C Seymour
A Sharp
A Wallace

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

G Stewart – Portfolio Holder, Looking After Our Communities

OFFICERS

H Bowers
M Bulman
T Hardy

Democratic Services Officer
Solicitor
Licensing Manager

01. MEMBERSHIP AND 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.

02. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Ch.'s Initials.....

03. 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.

04. SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

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

05. 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.

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.

06. NEXT MEETING

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

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

Ch.'s Initials.....

Licensing & Regulatory Committee, 23 August 2023

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Northumberland County Council

Licensing & Regulatory Committee

Wednesday, 14 February 2024

Fire Extinguisher Training Requirement for Taxis and Private Hire Drivers

Report of Councillor(s) [Cllr Gordon Stewart](#), Portfolio Holder, Looking After our Communities ,

Responsible Officer(s): Darin Wilson, Head of Public Protection,

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report is relates to the Corporate Plans priorities: achieving value for money.

2. Purpose of report

To seek approval for the Licensing Service to consult with licence holders to amend conditions of application for hackney carriage and private hire driver licences to include requirement for training in the use of fire extinguishers.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Members note the content of the report and agree to a consultation in respect of the implementation of the following application requirement for hackney carriage and private hire driver applicants:

All applications for hackney carriage and private hire drivers to include evidence of the attendance and completion of an approved training course in the use of fire extinguishers.

- 3.2 To approve the courses listed within Appendix A as relevant training courses to be consulted on.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Not applicable.

5. Background

- 5.1 The principal legislation associated with Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing and associated matters is contained within the:
- Town Police Clauses Act 1847
 - Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
 - Transport Act 1985
- 5.2 Whilst the law provides a framework for licensing and sets out in general terms the standards to be met before a licence may be approved, it is not prescriptive and allows local authorities to develop local arrangements and to attach conditions to some licences which are considered “reasonably necessary”.
- 5.3 The licences administered by the Council under the above legislation are:
- Hackney Carriage Proprietors licence
 - Hackney Carriage Drivers licence
 - Private Hire Vehicle Proprietors Licence
 - Private Hire Drivers Licence
 - Private Hire Operators Licence
- 5.4 The Council has a policy in relation to hackney carriage and private hire licensing. The policy contains requirements of applications and the conditions imposed on licences when granted.
- 5.5 The current standard conditions for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licences require the vehicle to have fire extinguishers. Although the current conditions require the licence holder to ensure the equipment is within the vehicle, there has never been any requirement for them to be used or training to be undertaken.
- 5.6 Following a request from the committee in considering whether the conditions should remain, Members determined that the condition should continue to be placed on licences and that officers investigate relevant training courses for possible inclusion as conditions of driver applications.
- 5.7 When making significant changes to application require or conditions it is best practice to consult on these changes prior to their introduction.
- 5.8 On 26th October 2022, the Licensing and Regulatory Committee considered a report by the Head of Public Protection to agree to a consultation on a proposal to remove fire extinguishers and first aid kit requirement.

The consultation ran for 12 weeks up to the 25th of January 2023.
90 responses were received. Out of the responses received 77 agreed with the proposal to remove the condition and 13 disagreed.

- 5.9 Colleagues in Integrated Transport were also contacted, who, in their opinion, felt the requirement should remain in place when drivers are transporting children or vulnerable adults in case of minor injuries. They also stated that most vehicles used in transporting wheelchair users have been modified with aftermarket ramps and doors, these although tested add load onto the main system so a fire extinguisher is a good safety measure with all the extra electrics in the vehicle.
- 5.10 The report went back to Committee in August 2023, where members resolved that the conditions to be retained and a report be brought back to the next committee on training requirements.
- 5.11 Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service have provided the following guidance;
Emergency equipment
8.19 The National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) recommend that licensing authorities require fire extinguishers to be provided in vehicles, should ensure that suitable and sufficient training is received by the drivers.
- 8.20 The NFCC's advice is that if a licensing authority elects not to require drivers to undertake training on the safe way to tackle a vehicle fire, vehicles should not be required to carry fire extinguishers and drivers advised to get out and stay out of the vehicle and call 999, rather than attempting to firefight.*
- 5.12 We have contacted other regional local authorities to establish what their policy is on the requirement. The below authorities were contacted; Middlesbrough- no requirement Darlington- Yes still require Durham - Yes, but looking to remove the requirement Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council- Yes still require Hartlepool- no requirement North Tyneside- no requirement.

6. Implications

Policy	Proposal for consultation to amend the hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy.
Finance and value for money	No financial implications expected for the Council however it will require additional costs for all hackney carriage and private hire driver applications.
Legal	None identified
Procurement	None have been identified.
Human resources	Resources required in relation to administering consultation. This would be completed using current staffing arrangements.

Property	None identified
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No.
Risk assessment	None have been identified.
Crime and disorder	None have been identified
Customer considerations	Customer consideration can be taken into account following consultation with licence holders.
Carbon reduction	None have been identified.
Health and wellbeing	None have been identified
Wards	All

7. Background papers

Not applicable

8. Links to other key reports already published

Licensing and Regulatory Report - Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy – Fire Extinguishers and First Aid Kits 15th February 2023

9. Author and Contact Details

Tasmin Hardy, Licensing Manager
 Email: Tasmin.Hardy@northumberland.gov.uk

Proposed courses to be Approved.

[Fire Extinguisher Awareness Online Course & Certificate From £6.50+VAT \(hsqe.co.uk\)](https://hsqe.co.uk)

This Fire Extinguisher Awareness online training course raises awareness of the different types of extinguishers and how to use them.

The course covers the basic components of fire, fire classification used in the UK, selecting the correct extinguisher, actions to be taken before using an extinguisher and how to use the various types of fire extinguisher.

- Assured by RoSPA and the CPD Certification Service
- Complete the course in approximately 60 minutes
- 100% online, including the final assessment
- Download the course certificate on completion
- Immediate start with 24/7 access

[Fire Extinguisher Training At Work | UK Fire Training](#)

Fire Extinguisher training session can accommodate 12 people per session. The cost is £530 +VAT (2 session on the same day is £830 + VAT). Each session is roughly 2 ½ - 3 hours.

The cost includes a certificate for each attendee lasting 3 years and the costs of the extinguishers used during the fire extinguisher practical session. All training is delivered on your premises by either current serving or retired firefighters.

The onsite Fire Safety Awareness and Extinguisher course is suitable for organisations who wish to equip their staff with the knowledge of how to use firefighting equipment in the event of a fire incident in the workplace as well as a good base knowledge of fire safety awareness.

This course would greatly benefit any employee at any level within the business. Upon completion of the course delegates will be able to correctly identify fire hazards, what to do in the event of a fire incident and the various classification of fire extinguishers and on what type of fire they should be used.

The course is suitable for all employees as the course aims are to equip delegates with an in-depth knowledge of fire extinguishers, their correct use and on what types of fire each extinguisher should and shouldn't be used. The course would be especially beneficial for employees working in industries and environments where the risk of fire is higher.

Duration

½ day

Course Content

- The Law (The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005)
- Fire Hazards, Risks and Prevention
- Types of Fire and their Behaviour
- Fire Safety Equipment inc Extinguisher Classification

- Hazard Spotting and Extinguisher Practical



Northumberland County Council

Licensing & Regulatory Committee

Wednesday, 14 February 2024

Hackney Carriage Tariff Review

Report of Councillor(s) [Cllr Gordon Stewart](#), , Cabinet Member for Looking After our Communities

Responsible Officer(s): Darin Wilson, Head of Public Protection

1. **Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

This report relates to the Corporate Plan priorities: driving economic growth

2. **Purpose of report**

To see the views of Members on whether there should be a review of the current hackney carriage tariff. The tariff was last reviewed in February 2023 with an agreement to undertake a review of the tariff within one year.

3. **Recommendations**

Members note the contents of the report and consider whether a review of the current tariff is required.

4. **Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

Not applicable.

5. **Background**

5.1 Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Section 65, the Council has the power to determine the charges that may be made in respect of journeys undertaken in a hackney carriage.

5.2 There are 4 elements in relation to the setting of a tariff: Timing of the tariffs, flag fall, intervals at which fare increases and extra charges.

- 5.3 On 15th February 2023 the Licensing Committee resolved to increase all 6 tariffs with an increase of 5%, to be reviewed in one year.
- 5.4 Concern has been raised that the current tariff for larger vehicles (5 or more passengers) is insufficient.
- 5.5 Following Local Government reorganisation in 2009 hackney carriage licensing was spilt into 6 zones covering the 6 former districts. Separate tariffs were in place for these 6 zones until a review of the tariffs in 2018.
- 5.6 In 2018 an extensive review of the tariffs was conducted. It merged all 6 sets of tariffs into one set which covered all of Northumberland. Due to the way the tariffs had been previously formulated it meant that for some zones there was a significant increase while for others it was modest. The current set of tariffs is attached at;
Appendix A
- 5.7 Should the Committee determine to amend the tariff, Officers will arrange for the public notices to be placed in appropriate local papers. Where no representations are received the tariff would come into effect the day after the end of the consultation period. If representations are received, they will be considered by the next relevant committee.

6. Implications

Policy	None identified
Finance and value for money	Should consultation be required public notices would be required to be placed in local papers which would cost between £500 - £1000.
Legal	
Procurement	None identified
Human resources	Staffing implications in relation to workload to conduct consultation. It is expected that this will be resourced through the Licensing Team existing staffing.
Property	None identified
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No
Risk assessment	None identified
Crime and disorder	None identified

Customer considerations	Should approval for increase in tariff be agreed public notices and consultation would be required. This would be taken into account in any final decision.
Carbon reduction	None identified
Health and wellbeing	None identified.
Wards	(All Wards);

7. Background papers

Not application.

8. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable.

9. Author and Contact Details

Tasmin Hardy, Licensing Manager
Email: Tasmin.Hardy@northumberland.gov.uk

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Hackney Carriages Official Fare Charges

Section 65 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

TARIFF 1

For the first 500 yards or part thereof	£2.70
For each subsequent 82 yards or part thereof	10p
Waiting time: per 30 seconds or part thereof	20p

TARIFF 2: Between 11pm and 7am and all day Sundays and Public Holidays

For the first 500 yards or part thereof	£3.30
For each subsequent 65 yards or part thereof	10p
Waiting time per 30 seconds or part thereof	20p

TARIFF 3: Between 6pm on 24 December and 3am on 27 December and between 6pm on 31 December and 3am on 2 January

For the first 500 yards or part thereof	£5.30
For each subsequent 82 yards or part thereof	20p
Waiting time: per 30 seconds or part thereof	40p

Tariffs 4, 5 & 6 must only be used where more than four passengers (excluding the driver) are carried in a hackney carriage licensed for that purpose.

TARIFF 4 (More than four passengers)

For the first 500 yards or part thereof	£3.10
For each subsequent 82 yards or part thereof	10p
Waiting time: per 30 seconds or part thereof	20p

TARIFF 5: (More than four passengers) Between 11pm and 7am and all day Sundays and Public Holidays

For the first 500 yards or part thereof	£3.60
For each subsequent 65 yards or part thereof	10p
Waiting time per 30 seconds or part thereof	20p

TARIFF 6: (More than four passengers) Between 6pm on 24 December and 3am on 27 December and between 6pm on 31 December and 3am on 2 January

For the first 500 yards or part thereof	£5.30
For each subsequent 82 yards or part thereof	20p
Waiting time: per 30 seconds or part thereof	40p

Soiling Charge (except children under 14 years of age)	£63.00
Dogs (excluding guide dogs) or other animal	£1.10
Each item of Luggage, pram, wheeled trolley	£1.10

nor non-cancellation of bookings where taxi supplied and dispatched but not required on arrival at the pick-up point the fares to be calculated from dispatch point at the tariff rates.

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Northumberland County Council

Licensing & Regulatory Committee

Wednesday, 14 February 2024

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Testing Update

Report of Councillor(s) Cllr Gordon Stewart, Cabinet Member for Looking After our Communities

Responsible Officer(s): Darin Wilson, Head of Public Protection.

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report relates to the Corporate Plan priorities achieving value for money

2. Purpose of report

To provide update to Members on the implementation of the revised of the hackney carriage and private hire policy to allow exemptions in agreed circumstances to allow vehicles to be tested by garages other than those operated by Northumberland County Council.

3. Recommendations

Members note the contents of the report.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Not applicable.

5. Background

5.1 Northumberland County Council is responsible for the licensing of hackney carriages (taxis) and private hire vehicles.

5.2 Before granting or renewing a vehicle licence, the Council must be satisfied that the vehicle is mechanically safe and suitable in size, passenger comfort and complies with the requirements of the Council's Licensing Policy.

- 5.3 In 2009, because of local government reorganisation the six district taxi licensing authorities merged with several different vehicle testing arrangements for licensing vehicles.
- 5.4 In 2016, to ensure impartially, consistency, greater communication and to ensure public safety the Council determined that all mechanical inspections should be conducted at a Northumberland County Council Depot. At the time of the introduction of the requirement the garages were based at Stakeford and Hexham. A further garage was then added in Alnwick.
- 5.5 The taxi and private hire vehicle tests are composed of 2 parts, the first part is a full MOT to ensure the vehicles safety and the second part is a compliance which looks at other elements including cleanliness, comfort and issues surrounding licence conditions.
- 5.6 This improved communication between garages and licensing staff allowed the authority to authorise the NCC garage staff to suspend vehicles with immediate effect.
- 5.7 On 26th April 2023, the Committee agreed a temporary authorisation for two independent garages to be authorised to complete hackney carriage and private hire vehicle following issues with equipment at the Hexham garage which were not expected to be resolved quickly. This helped alleviate the issues until the garage resumed testing.
- 5.8 On 23rd August 2023 the committee agreed 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.
- 5.9 There have been six requests for the use of other garages. Three requests were granted (two Hexham, one Berwick) and three refused.
- 5.10 Fleet services have confirmed the three garages are currently operating as normal and there are no current issues with facilitating the licensed vehicle testing. Officers are currently working with Fleet Services to evaluate future provision.

6. Implications

Policy	None identified
Finance and value for money	None identified
Legal	None identified
Procurement	None identified
Human resources	None identified
Property	None identified

The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - no equalities issues identified
Risk assessment	None identified
Crime and disorder	None identified
Customer considerations	None identified
Carbon reduction	None identified
Health and wellbeing	None identified
Wards	(All Wards);

7. Background papers

Not applicable

8. Links to other key reports already published

Licensing and Regulatory Committee , Hackney Carriage and Private Hire
Licensing Authorised Testing Stations 23rd August 2023.

9. Author and Contact Details

Tasmin Hardy, Licensing Manager
Email: Tasmin.Hardy@northumberland.gov.uk

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