



LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

DATE: 23 AUGUST 2023

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing - Authorised Testing Stations

Report Darin Wilson, Head of Public Protection

Cabinet Member: **Cllr Gordon Stewart, Portfolio Holder, Looking After our Communities**

Purpose of report

To seek approval for independent garages to be authorised to complete taxi and private hire vehicle testing in circumstances where the current garages cannot fulfil the demand.

Recommendations

Members delegate to officers authority to approve six garages within Northumberland to conduct the testing and inspection of vehicles where the current NCC garages are unable to provide adequate provision within an acceptable timescale.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the achieving value for money and driving economic growth priorities of the NCC Corporate Plan 2023-2026

Key issues

In 2016 the Council's hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy was amended to state that the testing and inspection of licensed vehicles must be completed by one of Northumberland County Councils MOT testing Stations.

The Garages are currently at Hexham, Stakeford and Alnwick

It is estimated that this financial year there would be 1339 test required.

Issues arise where there are unexpected surges in demand or mechanical problems at the garages. This was most recently seen at Hexham where the brake roller needed to be replaced and the garage had to be closed for 8 weeks. The other garages struggled to accommodate all the vehicles requiring a test. The matter was brought as an urgent item to the committee on 15th February 2023 where it was agreed to authorised 2 independent garages on a temporary basis.

Background

Northumberland County Council is responsible for the licensing of hackney carriages plying for hire and private hire vehicles operating within its administrative area.

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

To establish whether a vehicle meets these conditions it must be tested and inspected, at a Northumberland County Council Mot Testing station, prior to the application for the licence or renewal.

In addition to this initial test, the Council has the power to require the discretionary testing of vehicles up to three times a year. The Council's policy requires that vehicles over five years old or with a mileage in excess of 200,000 must undergo a further, annual, mid-year test, with an additional routine test for vehicles over eight years old

In 2016, in order to ensure impartially, consistency, greater communication and to ensure public safety the Council determined that all mechanical inspections shall 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.

On 26th April 2023, the Committee agreed a temporary authorisation for 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.

Implications

Policy	Amendment to the policy.
---------------	--------------------------

Finance and value for money	None for licensing service.
Legal	
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	none
Crime & Disorder	none
Customer Consideration	Enhanced procedures for safeguarding the Public
Carbon reduction	None
Health and Wellbeing	None
Wards	All

Background papers:

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	
Relevant Executive Director	Graeme Binning
Chief Executive	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Gordon Stewart

Author and Contact Details

Tasmin Hardy

Licensing Manager