



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

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