

DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PENALTY POINT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This document details the Penalty Point procedure used by the Council to deal with minor breaches or infringements of legislation or unacceptable behaviour committed by those licensed as Drivers and Operators and vehicle proprietors, in much the same way that points can be attached to a DVLA driving licence.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1** The aim of this policy is to improve the levels of compliance of licensing regulations and requirements and to help raise standards, safety and the protection of members of the public affected by the actions of licensed drivers and operators and vehicle proprietors.
- 2.2** The Council is committed to ensure that only fit and proper persons become, and remain, as hackney carriage and private hire drivers and Operators and vehicle proprietors.
- 2.3** The procedure also seeks to improve the level of transparency and consistency in which the licensing system is administered and enforced.

3. PURPOSE OF THE PROCEDURE

- 3.1** The penalty point procedure is designed to work in conjunction with other enforcement options, identifying those drivers, operators or vehicle proprietors who repeatedly behave in a manner which, if taken as a whole, indicates that they are not fit and proper persons to hold a licence.
- 3.2** The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (the relevant legislation covering such licences), only allows for the suspension or revocation of a licence, or the prosecution of a licence holder where they commit an offence under the above legislation. Therefore there is no system in place to deal with minor breaches or infringements, which in isolation are not serious enough to warrant the suspension or revocation of a licence.

4. WHO IS COVERED BY THE PROCEDURE

- 4.1** Penalty Points may be awarded against anyone holding a hackney carriage licence; a private hire driver licence; a Private Hire Operator Licence or a Vehicle Proprietor.

5. ISSUING OF PENALTY POINTS

- 5.1** Officers will investigate allegations of offences by licensed operators, drivers or vehicles owners. When considering what action to take the Investigating officer(s) will take into account all available and appropriate evidence, such as eye witness accounts and their reliability, the views of the licence holder who may be affected by the outcome of the investigation, etc.. The outcome of investigations may result in a wide range of potential actions against the driver and /or operator and / or proprietor. This procedure deals with the option of penalty points. For other enforcement action please refer to the relevant procedures.
- 5.2** Once the decision to issue penalty points is made, letters will be sent to all persons/organisations involved in the allegation(s) detailing the findings and decision of the Investigation officer. A record of the decision and any copies of associated documents will be kept on file (usually in secure electronic format) and retained for a period of 6 months following the expiry of the 2 year rolling period referred to at 5.6 below.
- 5.3** The points will be issued by an Officer, or the Committee, to the driver and /or operator and / or proprietor depending on the circumstances, and will be confirmed in writing within 14 days of their issue.
- 5.4** Any penalty points incurred under this procedure are completely separate from any points which may be attached by the Police, through fixed penalty notices, or the Courts, through convictions to DVLA driving licences.
- 5.5** Confirmed infringements or breaches resulting in the award of penalty points will act as an ongoing record of a licensee's behaviour and conduct and may be used in determining whether they are a fit and proper person to hold a licence.
- 5.6** Where a licence holder accumulates 20 or more penalty points, in separate incidents, in a 24 month rolling period (a period of 24 consecutive months determined on a rolling basis with a new 24 month period beginning each day) the matter will be referred to the next available Licensing Committee. The Committee will be required to determine whether the driver or operator is a fit and proper person. The following action can be taken by the Committee:
- i. Take no action
 - ii. Issue a warning
 - iii. Issue additional penalty points
 - iv. Suspend a licence as a punitive sanction
 - v. Suspend a licence to correct a fault, defect, or breach
 - vi. Revoke or refuse to renew a licence
- 5.7** Periods of suspension will be determined by the Licensing Committee and will depend on the nature of the offence, breach, or infringement and the individual's compliance history. A determination will also be made as to whether the suspension or revocation is on the grounds of public safety, thereby having immediate effect.

5.8 Where a driver, proprietor or operator reaches the 20 points and is referred to the Committee it will not preclude all relevant information being disclosed. This will include any other penalty points, complaints, warnings, and suspensions etc. The 20 points will be a referral trigger.

5.9 Where an identified breach results in the issue of a single award of 20 penalty points these matters will be considered as soon as is practicable by the Head of Planning & Public Protection or in his/her absence, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Licensing Committee, or in his / her absence, the vice Chair, for appropriate action. Any action will be considered alongside the Council's agreed document "Procedure for Suspension / Revocation of a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licence".

6. A BREACH OR INFRINGEMENT IS DISCOVERED

6.1 If there is good evidence that there was a breach or inappropriate behaviour and it is considered appropriate to do so, the licence holder will be issued with a penalty point notice.

6.2 The penalty point notice will describe the infringement or breach, date and time it took place, and how many points have been issued to the licence holder.

6.3 The Council reserve the right to not impose penalties points under this scheme where in the opinion of the Officers the allegations are either frivolous, vexatious or repetitious, or made, in the Officers opinion, to further personal grievances or which are not made within a reasonable time period, to be determined by the Council depending on the individual circumstances, of the breach having occurred.

7. HOW TO REPORT AN INFRINGEMENT

7.1 Complaints from members of the public, residents or businesses concerning any breaches of conduct will be subject to investigation by Officers, and only where there is clear, verifiable evidence of an infringement e.g. a photograph of an illegally parked vehicle, will a penalty point notice be issued.

7.2 Infringements can be reported through the Council's website <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/contact-us/contact-us.aspx>

8. INFRINGEMENTS/BREACHES COVERED BY THE SCHEME

8.1 A full list of infringements and breaches covered by this Scheme can be found at Appendix 1.

9. APPEALS

9.1 If a licensee wishes to appeal against the issue of a "penalty points notice"

he/she must do so in writing, stating the reasons of the appeal, within 10 working days from the date of issue of such a notice, to the Council's Head of Planning and Public Protection or in his/her absence the Public Protection Manager, who, in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee, will have the discretion to:-

- i. uphold the Council Officer's decision – retain the number points on the “penalty points notice”; or
- ii. cancel the issue of the “penalty points notice” to the licensee.

9.2 The Head of Planning and Public Protection or, as the case may be, the Public Protection Manager will write to the licensee informing them of the outcome within 10 working days of receiving the appeal

9.3 If no appeal is lodged within 10 days from the date of issue of the Notice, then the Council will take the view that the licence holder has accepted the penalty points.

9.4 There is no appeal beyond the decision made by the Head of Public Protection. However, should a licensee be subsequently reported to the Licensing Committee for accumulating 20 penalty points, he/she has the opportunity to raise the validity of the points issued.

10. RE-APPLYING FOR A LICENCE

10.1 If a licence holder has had their licence revoked, they may apply for a new licence, but its Council Policy that such an application under the Penalty Point Scheme will not be entertained until a suitable period from the date of revocation has elapsed, as detailed below:

- i. where the penalty points which resulted in the revocation included any infringements that attracted 10 or more points, then this period will be 24 months
- ii. where none of the infringements individually attracted more than 10 points, then this period is reduced to twelve months

10.2 It should not be assumed that an application for a new licence, following revocation under this Scheme, will automatically be granted. Any application will be subject to the Council's normal application process and consideration of whether the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a licence.

11. DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS

11.1 The Head of Planning and Public Protection Public Protection can delegate authority to the Public Protection Manager to issue penalty points in accordance with this policy. The Public Protection Manager can also delegate this function to an authorised Officer of the Council.

12. REVIEW OF THE SCHEME

12.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years. Notwithstanding this, the

policy will continue to be evaluated and may be updated at any time, subject to the appropriate consultation.

APPENDIX 1 – PENALTY POINT SCHEME

FOR BREACHES OR INFRINGEMENTS BY HACKNEY AND PRIVATE HIRE OPERATORS, DRIVERS AND VEHICLE PROPRIETORS

SCALE OF PENALTY POINTS

REF No	BREACH/OFFENCE OR INFRINGEMENT	PENALTY POINTS
1	Use/Cause/Permit a vehicle to be driven with a defect contrary to Road Vehicle (Construction & Use) Regs 1986 (as amended) (per defect):	
	a) Defective tyres (including spare)	10
	b) Defective brakes	10
	c) Defective seat belts	10
	d) Defective steering	10
	e) Defective suspension	10
	f) Defective doors (closing/ locking mechanism)	6
	g) Defective windscreen - cracked etc. in drivers view	6
	h) Defective bodywork- sharp edges, corrosion likely to cause injury to persons	6
	i) Defective headlamps, brake lights, sidelights	10
	j) Defective windscreen wipers/washers	6
	k) Defective exhaust	3
	l) Defective horn	3
	m) Insecure battery which could be a fire risk.	10
	n) Any other relevant defect not referred to above	6
2	Failing to produce Certificate of Compliance, MOT certificate, driving licence or insurance certificate, which is valid on the day of request, within 7 days of being requested	3
3	Obstructing an authorised officer or Police Officer	10
4	Failure to carry an assistance dog without an exemption notice	3
5	Using or allowing a vehicle to be used subject to a suspension/revocation issued by an Authorised Officer or Police Officer	20
6	Using an unlicensed vehicle or licensed vehicle without Insurance	20

7	Driver using a handheld mobile phone, handheld two way radio, whilst the vehicle is in motion	10
8	Presenting a licensed vehicle for testing in an unsafe or dangerous Condition	20
9	Providing false or misleading information on licence application form / failing to provide relevant information or the relevant fee (including dishonoured cheques)	10
10	Failure to submit a licensed vehicle that is 5 years old, or more for a 6 monthly MoT and provide documented proof to the Council that it has passed such a test. The Council will expect to see documentary evidence that such a test has been carried out within 4 weeks of the due date of the MoT test.	10
11	Operator failing to keep proper records or keep records in accordance with the licence conditions	3
12	Failing to notify the Council of details of road traffic collision within 72 hours	6
13	Failure to behave in a civil and orderly manner (including rude or aggressive behaviour) to a member of the public, licensed driver or Officer of the Council or Police Officer	10
14	Plying for hire by private hire drivers.	10
15	Carrying more passengers than the capacity stated on the vehicle licence.	20
16	Failure to carry an up to date fire extinguisher.	3
17	Failure to wear private hire/hackney carriage driver's badge.	3
18	Refusal to accept hiring without reasonable cause e.g. reasonable cause - when drunk or rude customer	6
19	Failure to observe rank discipline – taxi drivers (e.g. plying for hire outside the markings of one of the County's taxi ranks – parking in front or behind rank).	5
20	Failure to give assistance with loading/unloading luggage to or from any building or place, without reasonable cause e.g. temporary medical condition	3
21	Failure to attend punctually at appointed time and place without sufficient cause:	
	a) During daytime	3
	b) During the hours of darkness	6
22	Leaving a Hackney Carriage unattended whilst on a designated rank, without reasonable cause e.g. quick toilet break	3
23	Failure to comply with the Driver Dress Code	3
24	Failure to comply with the Code of Good Conduct	5
25	Displaying any feature on a private hire vehicle that may suggest that it is a taxi vehicle.	5
26	Failure to carry a legal spare wheel and tools or other method of repair e.g. foam/run flat tyre	3
27	Failure to display the external/internal licence plate or signs as required.	3
28	Displaying unsuitable or inappropriate sited signs or unauthorised advertisements in or on the vehicle.	3
29	Charging hackney carriage passenger more than the metered or agreed fare	6

30	Failure to return a vehicle licence plate within 7 days after request	6
31	Using a non-approved or non-calibrated taximeter	6
32	Unreasonably prolonging a journey or any misconduct regarding the charging of fares	6
33	Failure to notify the Council, in writing, of any conviction, caution, fixed penalty or similar within 7 working days	6
34	Failure to notify the Council, in writing, of a change of address within 7 working days	3
35	Failure to notify, in writing, a change in medical circumstances	6
36	Unsatisfactory condition of a vehicle (interior or exterior):	
	a) Dirty exterior	3
	b) Filthy and stained interior	6
	c) Other non-compliant licensable condition (as required by the "Blue Book")	3
37	Driving or parking in a manner likely to cause inconvenience, distress or danger to members of the public e.g. tailgating/speeding/overtaking/furious driving	10
38	Parking in contravention of public highway parking restrictions including occupying/parking in a loading bay	5
39	Parking/stopping or picking up or dropping off passengers on zigzags of a pedestrian crossing or school entrance	6
40	Failing to display Hackney Carriage fare card in vehicle	3
41	Failure to present vehicle for inspection by an authorised officer at required time/location.	10
42	Private Hire driver charging or attempting to charge more than the fare agreed with the customer by the operator	6
43	Private hire vehicle parking / waiting on a taxi rank	6
44	Smoking in a licensed vehicle, and allowing passengers to smoke in a licensed vehicle	10
45	Failure to display in a licensed vehicle, no smoking signage as prescribed in the Health Act 2006	3