

REPORT TO:	Licensing Committee
DATE:	22 nd June 2022
LEAD OFFICER:	Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services
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SUBJECT:	Update on the Work of the Licensing Section in 2021/22

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Members of the work of Licensing Officers.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 This report provides information on the work in respect of the functions of the Licensing Section and includes licences issued, complaints and service requests received and other activities completed during 2021/22.

3. POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

3.1 No decision required.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1 The report is broken down into two main sections, namely operational and management matters.

5. ISSUES AND FINDINGS - OPERATIONAL MATTERS

5.1 Alcohol and Entertainment

5.1.1 Currently there are 496 licensed premises – 101 on sales; 132 off sales; 208 both on/off sales – and 193 Late Night Refreshment establishments, 36 of which are solely serving late night refreshment. Personal licence holders amount to 1325.

5.1.2 There were 37 complaints from the public in relation to licensed premises and the vast majority of those were linked to issues in relation to noise nuisance but also issues in respect of antisocial behaviour and underage sales. These have been dealt with in collaboration with our services and appropriate action or advice given where necessary or are ongoing.

5.1.3 During the year there have been applications for:-

- 19 new premises

- 25 transfers of licence
- 19 variation of conditions or licence details
- 66 variations of Designated Premises Supervisor.
- 136 temporary event notices.
- 42 new personal licences and 20 changes to personal licence details

5.1.4 Licensing Officers continue to work alongside partners – North Wales Police, Immigration Enforcement Officers and other Denbighshire teams, such as Health & Safety, Food Safety and Trading Standards – to conduct joint visits where necessary. Notably, one such joint work stream involved compliance with Minimum Unit Pricing requires. Around 100 premises visited with 5% not compliant at the time of visit but all rectified satisfactorily.

5.1.5 Licensing Officers continue to meet regularly – usually once each week – with North Wales Police colleagues to identify and deal with emerging issues following the principles laid out in the Statement of Licensing Policy e.g. Level 1 engagement / Level 2 Action Plans.

5.2 Hackney and Private Hire Licensing.

5.2.1 Currently there are

- 224 Hackney Carriage Vehicles - 20 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs)
- 47 Private Hire Vehicles - 11 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs)
- 16 Private Hire Operators
- 22 Private Hire Drivers
- 287 Dual Drivers (Hackney Carriage and Private Hire)

5.2.2 There have been 46 taxi related complaints during the year on matters including an abuse of taxi rank, unlicensed vehicle, illegal parking/plying for hire, overcharging and careless driving. Appropriate action was taken or is ongoing at officer level.

5.2.3 During the year there have been 36 new applicants for a licence to drive private hire / hackney carriage vehicles. Three applications were withdrawn at the applicants request and two applications was refused. In relation to renewal applications two drivers were refused on application, one of which had their appeal rejected at Magistrates' Court. Additionally, during the year one driver had their licence revoked and is subject to an ongoing appeal.

5.2.4 Outside the usual compliance testing of vehicles ad hoc checks were conducted on 46 vehicles at a variety of locations – schools, taxi ranks and roadside. Of those almost half (41%) had defects, although the overwhelming number related to minor non-safety elements of conditions.

5.2.5 Officers had reason to issue written warnings to 13 drivers during the course of the year, all in respect of undeclared driving endorsements.

5.3 Gambling, Gaming and Lotteries

5.3.1 There has been some significant work on ensuring accuracy of databases for gambling related premises. Currently there are:

- 5 Adult Gaming Centres
- 3 Family Entertainment Centres
- 3 Bingo Premises Licence
- 12 Betting shops
- 1 Club Gaming Permit
- 8 Club Machine Permit
- 8 Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centre Gaming Permits
- 9 Licensed Premises Permit
- 85 Registered Lotteries

5.3.2 There have not been any complaints in respect of licensed gambling premises.

5.4 Street Trading

5.4.1 There was only one application for a street trading permit and this was subsequently withdrawn.

5.4.2 Four complaints were lodged concerning street trading practices, all of which have been resolved.

5.4.3 Members are advised that current practice for any new applications will remain until such time as a policy has been determined and approved through this committee. It therefore remains that this will be drafted and presented by officers in due course.

5.5 Charity Collections

5.5.1 There have been:

- 17 permits for house to house collections
- 10 permits for street collections.

5.5.2 One complaint was received in respect of regulated charity street collections which resulted in no further action.

5.6 Scrap Metal

5.6.1 There have been no applications this current year for scrap metal sites or collectors. It should be noted however that approvals last for 3 years and are not due for renewal this year.

5.6.2 There have been three complaints in respect of scrap metal issues, all concerning potential unlicensed activity and ongoing.

5.7 Service Requests / Freedom of Information

5.7.1 During the year there were:

- 314 service requests recorded across the range of functions carried out by the Licensing Team where information or advice etc. have been requested and given, and
- 20 Freedom of Information requests, relating to a range of matters, were received and had an appropriate response.

5.8 Covid related work

5.8.1 In response to the pandemic restrictions were frequent and constantly changing. Licensing officers had been heavily involved from the onset helping ensuring businesses complied and were able to operate and continued to provide advice and guidance as the country moved out of the pandemic. During this year officers had responded to almost 100 covid related matters.

5.9 Overall workload results

5.9.1 During the year there were:

- 75 inspections, primarily around vehicles and licensed premises, and
- Over 5,000 interactions with Licensing Officers including those linked to inspections and complaints as well as other interactions with businesses and public, e.g. telephone calls, letters, notices and so on.

5.10 Communications

5.10.1 Frequent, direct communications (primarily via email) with licensees. Licensing Officers continue to publish periodic newsletters to the taxi industry locally.

5.10.2 Social media accounts have seen a number of proactive messages being posted throughout the year.

6. MANAGEMENT MATTERS

6.1 Policies

6.1.1 A number of policy reviews have been started during the year, most notably those relating to taxis as well as street trading and the Statement of Licensing Policy. Officers have drafted a revised forward work plan and will continue to update Members on that at each committee hearing.

6.2 Fees

6.2.1 At the time of writing the fees and charges for administering the taxi licensing regime have not changed although a review will take place in 2022.

6.3 Complaints against service

6.3.1 There has been one formal complaint against the service in this reporting period. The matter concerned the decision making process for taxi licensing and an appropriate response was provided.

6.4 Future Additional Workload considerations

6.4.1 As has been the case for a number of years, Welsh Government are reviewing the way taxi licensing regime is regulated and administered. Significant work has already take place to bring the Council's policy in line with WG thinking and this policy work will continue throughout the year.

6.4.2 Members will be aware of the Council's – and Welsh Government's – aim to have zero emissions. It is anticipated that Licensing could play a part in that vision through its processes for taxi licensing. Members and officers may wish to begin to identify what incentives could encourage licensees locally to enable the aim to be met.

6.4.3 Officers are exploring further opportunities to enable a more efficient process for applicants for the variety of licences issued. This includes further development of database to allow online applications and public registers and the potential to introduce an electronic "Knowledge Test" for new taxi driver applicants.

6.4.4 Officers are arranging a training event for Licensing Committee Members towards the end of the year. Additionally, to support continuing Member development, Officers can accommodate any requests from any Committee Member interested in shadowing Officers on their duties.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the committee:
- a. note the activity report for this year, and
 - b. note and comment on the contents of this report.