

Report To: Performance Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 29th November 2012

Lead Member / Officer: Cllr David Smith

Report Author: Graham Boase (Head of Planning and Public Protection)

Title: Review of licensing matters

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 The report relates to the comprehensive review of taxi and private hire vehicles (PHV) licensing policies and procedures and to advise on the reporting mechanism to Licensing Committee.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 Members have previously requested a report on the Council's taxi and PHV licensing systems. The report will hopefully provide Members with reassurance that Officers are revising policies and procedures to ensure appropriate control over taxis and PHVs.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 That Members note the content of the report and support the approach undertaken to date on the review process.

4. Report details.

- 4.1 Taxis and PHV are an important mode of local transport. The Council has a responsibility to provide a robust taxi and PHV licensing system, which ensures the public travel safely, receive a good level of service and drivers are not overly burdened by unnecessary conditions.
- 4.2 In Denbighshire there are currently 17 PHV Operators, 84 PHV licensed vehicles, 49 licensed PH drivers, 238 Hackney Carriage Vehicles (Taxis), and 338 Hackney (taxi) and PHV licensed drivers. Licenses are received, considered and issued by the Licensing Admin Team. Vehicle licenses are issued by Fleet Services once authorised by the licensing admin team. The licensing system can involve a number of team/agencies, including Licensing Admin Team, Community Safety Enforcement Officers, Fleet Services, Legal Officers, Members, Social Services, Police and CRB etc and it is therefore important to ensure that a robust system is in place which is understood by all parties. The Council operate a Licensing Committee who consider and propose policy, and make decisions as a quasi-judicial body, on individual

applications. A number of decisions are delegated to officers and/or Head of Service.

- 4.3 Taxi licensing is a particularly complex area of licensing. Co-ordination and communication between service areas of the Council and also partner agencies is integral to the safe operation of the system, and to protect the safety of the public. There is intelligence to indicate that there are a core of operators and drivers that are non-compliant and the Authority have and will continue to take robust action against drivers and operators that have failed to meet the required standards.
- 4.4 In order to ensure that the taxi licensing process is as robust as possible and that all interested parties have an understanding of the licensing process, a full review of the taxi licensing process was commenced during 2012.
- 4.5 This followed a project management approach and the project proposal can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.6 Meetings were held with Licensing Admin Officers, Licensing Enforcement Officers, Social Services, Fleet Services, School Transport and North Wales Police to review all licensing processes as a group. This identified areas for improved communication and achieved the desired outcome of clarifying roles and responsibilities within the taxi licensing process and a better understanding by all of how it should work. This was facilitated by Internal Audit and revised processes were produced and circulated to the group for final agreement.
- 4.7 The group met on the 8th of November 2012 to finalise and agree the revised processes, which will then be presented to the Head of Service and subsequently Licensing Committee. Sample revised processes may be seen at Appendix 2a.
- 4.8 Further work is now planned to review the scheme of delegation and relevant parts of the Constitution.
- 4.9 The project remains on target to be completed by the 31st of December 2012. The Licensing Committee will be presented with an update report during 2013. The forward work programme for the Licensing Committee can be found as Appendix 3.
- 4.10 Scrutiny Committee may want to consider reviewing the effectiveness of the revised policies and procedures some time later in 2013.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1 The work on reviewing the taxi licensing process, with particular emphasis on safeguarding the public directly contributes to the corporate priority of 'Protection of the vulnerable' and also the wider aim and Service Outcome of keeping our communities safe.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 The cost will be met within service budget.

7. What consultations have been carried out and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken for any new or revised Policy that is produced following this review.

7.2 Consultation has been undertaken with the following sections/services before, during and following the review: Head of Planning and Public Protection, Licensing Admin Section, Community Safety Enforcement, Legal Services, Social Services, School Transport Section, North Wales Police, Fleet Services. Responses have all been considered during the review process and incorporated where appropriate within the revised processes.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

8.1 Not required.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

9.1 If the recommendations of this report are not agreed with, then the Council exposes itself to potential liabilities and claims as a result of not complying with legal requirements and best practice standards.

10. Power to make the Decision

No formal decision required.