



LICENSING COMMITTEE
30 March 2023

ITEM 06

Report sponsor: Samantha Dennis, Director of Public Protection & Streetpride
Report author: Angela Rawson, Service Manager - Licensing

Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards Update

Purpose

- 1.1 The report provides a progress update on the work taken place to ensure the subject areas in the Department of Transport (DfT) Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards have been explored and changes implemented where appropriate with the intention to improve safety for taxi and private hire vehicle passengers.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee note the content of the report.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 The information provided in this report is for member information only.

Supporting information

- 4.1 Members may recall that after reviewing the DfT document in detail against our current practices, it was clear that as a Council, we were already at the forefront with many of the suggested actions already being embedded within in our existing processes, conditions and policies.
- 4.2 However, there is always room for improvement and it was felt an appropriate time further review of existing measures to ensure that the suggestions made in the Statutory Standards had been fully considered. As such, further enhancements were made to the service itself, changes were made to some procedures and practices and more rigid requirements in relation to criminality checks by way of licence conditions were implemented.
- 4.3 **Administration**
Two new members of staff have been added to the licensing team as a whole, a Senior Licensing Officer whose role in part is to review the service and identify areas for improvement whilst ensuring that our customers receive the best possible service for their money.
- 4.4 The second is an apprenticeship role within licensing to build upon the overall team resilience, provide business continuity with a view to futureproofing the service.

4.4 **Sharing & Gathering Information**

The Standards suggested the use of the NR3 register run by the National Anti Fraud Network (NAFN) for the recording of refusals and revocations of drivers licences. The database can be accessed by all Councils signed up to NAFN to share information about drivers history in these circumstances. The system was implemented here at Derby City Council last year and is actively used to make historical enquires whilst also recording revocations and refusals of our own drivers. Since its implementation, legislation has designated the NR3S (as it is known now) as the required database for recording not only refusals and revocations but now also suspensions of a drivers licence, taking those checks one step further. Suspensions therefore are also now recorded on NR3S.

4.5 **Decision Making**

Conversations are taking place with our democratic services colleagues to review the structure of member training to ensure they continue to have the knowledge to confidently carry out their role on a licensing panel/Committee.

The Scheme of Delegation has been reviewed to ensure that the requisite delegations are in place to facilitate sound decisions. Members may have noted that there have been a few more hearings for contentious taxi related matters recently.

4.6 **Drivers**

Whilst an Enhanced DBS is required from licensed drivers on application and renewal, and a driver is also conditioned to sign up to the DBS online update service, it is also proposed to begin the process of carrying out six monthly checks of drivers to assist in ensuring propriety.

Our existing safeguarding training has been reviewed to ensure we are capturing current trends such as County Lines, trafficking, violence against women and girls, as well as identifying support for other types of vulnerable passengers, including signs to watch for and signposting contacts for concerns. Over the next year, we will be looking at viability and costing of rolling out a programme of refresher training for each driver as part of their next renewal process.

The knowledge test carried out by prospective new drivers has also been reviewed to ensure it is relevant. We will be looking into the possibility of moving this to a digital option.

4.7 **Vehicles**

By way of condition, all vehicle proprietors will be required to undergo a basic DBS, unless they are the driver in which case they will have already undergone an enhanced check.

The subject of whether CCTV should be mandated in hackney & private hire vehicles has been through its first phase and the information was presented to the Committee last year when it was deferred for additional information to be provided. Collation of the required data has been more protracted than expected as we want to ensure that we communicate with as wide a group of persons/groups as possible so as to attract a fair and open capture of the local position. As a reminder, the provision can only be mandated where it is clear that there is a local need to do so. It is therefore proposed that the second phase is presented to this Committee later this year.

4.8 **Enforcement**

In relation to having a joint authorisation of Officers across the County (Cross Border Enforcement Protocol) enquiries were made through the local Derbyshire Licensing Group and it did not appear that the challenges from cross border vehicles was not coming from our own districts but from further afield. Positive relationships have been forged with enforcement officers in those problem areas to ensure that when there are issues, they are dealt with expediently. This has proven successful on a number of occasions.

4.9 Although this report is an update about where we are in connection with the Statutory Standards, taxi licensing itself undergoes continuous improvement reviews as part of business as usual. This helps us to offer an exceptional customer service as well as supporting date digital growth within the service as a whole.

Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 None directly arising from this report.

Other options

6.1 Not applicable.

Financial and value for money issues

7.1 Not applicable for the purpose of this report.

Legal implications

8.1 None directly arising from this report.

Climate implications

9.1 None directly arising from this report.

Other significant implications

10.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Lionel Desa, Solicitor	20/03/2023
Finance		
Service Director(s)	Samantha Dennis - Director	6/03/2023
Report sponsor		
Other(s)	Michael Kay – Head of Service	16/03/2023

Background papers:	Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
List of appendices:	None