

Licensing and Appeals Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2016

Present

Councillor Longsden (in the Chair)
Councillors Barrett, Connolly, Cookson, Evans, Grimshaw, Hassan, Hughes, S. Judge, Madeleine Monaghan, Paul and Stone.

Apologies

Councillors Loughman and Ludford

LAP/16/19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 18 July 2016 were submitted for consideration as a correct record.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2016.

LAP/16/20 Taxi Compliance Update Report

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Planning, Building Control and Licensing. The report informed the Committee of the work undertaken by the Licensing Unit's Taxi Compliance Team for the following reporting periods:

- July – December 2015 (Qtr 2 and 3 2015/16)
- January – March 2016 (Qtr 4 2015/16)
- April – June 2016 (Qtr 1 2016/17)

This report provided the committee with information in respect of work that has been undertaken by the Compliance Team over the past year. The data is broken down into different reporting periods so that it can be examined within the context of the service delivery and changes taking effect at that time. Therefore it should be noted that reporting periods are not directly comparable as yet.

In April 2015 a new supervisor role was filled from within the Compliance Team with the promotion of an experienced Compliance Officer. This role was created to assist the Principle Licensing Officer in the management of the complaints system, the collection of statistical information of work outputs and the day to day management of the team. The post that officer vacated was backfilled in October 2015 by recruiting an experienced vehicle examiner on to the team.

New recording mechanisms were then introduced in July 2015, capturing more of the activity and outputs of the compliance team, as well as more reliable data than had been available previously. This will improve further still with the introduction in October 2016 of a new case management system, UNIFORM. It should be noted that the Licensing Unit will continue to work with colleagues in the department's systems support team and ICT to continually improve record keeping, performance reporting,

as well as exploring ways in which systems can be accessed and updated contemporaneously whilst officers are mobile.

The team's function changed significantly in January 2016, when, as part of the wider Neighbourhood Services Review, the responsibility for enforcement of Premises and Street Trading was passed from the Compliance Team to the new Out of Hours Licensing Compliance Team. This accounted for a large amount of reactive work as well as programmed activity throughout the year. The Taxi Compliance team remained responsible for Gambling Act enforcement and Sex Establishments until September 2016 (although this generated little reactive work) and is now solely concerned with compliance and enforcement activity against Taxis and Private Hire vehicles, drivers and operators within the City.

Therefore the reporting periods in this report should be read in the context of:

- Qtr 2 and 3 2015/16 (July – December 2015) – compliance team with wider premises and street trading remit for the City
- Qtr 4 2015/16 and Qtr 1 2016/17 (Jan – June 2016) – compliance team focused solely on taxi and private hire enforcement therefore shows a significant increase in taxi related activity

The Committee welcomed the changed way of working with the new OOH Compliance structure, and asked that an officer from the OOH team attend future meetings of the Licencing and Appeals Committee.

The Committee discussed the compliance activity contained in the report, and queried how the compliance activity was publicised. The Principle Licensing Officer told the Committee that Press Releases were issued on a regular basis, but that unless there was some significance about a case this was rarely picked up by press outlets.

The Committee then asked how complaints about drivers were collected, and whether social media was used for this, or a formal complaint process. The Principle Licensing Officer said that there were several means of lodging a complaint, but that the service is reliant on people reporting problems rather than seeking out issues. The Committee also confirmed that the Council website does contain information about how non-passengers can also make representation about a driver's behaviour, whether positive or negative.

The Head of Planning, Building Control and Licencing said that the service was moving to a new online Public Access system which is similar to the Planning Portal to make it easier for members of the public to contact the Licensing Unit.

The Committee requested further information about how many collisions involving Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles have taken place over the last 12 months, and whether this was increasing or decreasing over time.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To request further information about the number of collisions involving Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles and whether there was an identifiable trend increasing or decreasing over time.
3. To request that a member of the Out of Hours Licensing Compliance Team attend future meetings of the Committee.

LAP/16/20 Taxi Licensing Quarterly report: Qtr 1 2016/17

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Planning, Building Control and Licensing. The Licensing Unit deals with approximately 11,000 hackney carriage and private hire applications each year. This report provides details, on a quarterly basis, of the work undertaken by and performance of the taxi licensing processing team.

Previous Taxi Licensing Quarterly reports were considered by the Committee as confidential, or part B, business, but in order to increase transparency in demonstrating to the public how the Licensing Unit operates, the report had been anonymised so that it could be placed in the public domain. This should also reduce the number of Freedom of Information requests received by the Unit regarding Taxi Licensing compliance activity.

The Committee were told that a review of the Panel team function is also taking place. The officers drafting Panel and Sub-Committee reports are currently managed by the Principle Licensing Officer over the Taxi Processing team. It is considered more appropriate to report the outputs of this function alongside other compliance outputs, and therefore it was recommended that this performance data be included in future quarterly Compliance Team reports.

The Committee also expressed concern at the number of vehicles that failed their regular vehicle checks, and were told that historically the checks had been used by proprietors to ascertain what may be wrong with a vehicle and then for the vehicle to be fixed. The Principle Licensing Officer said that the recent introduction of a daily check sheet that proprietors had to complete and present when the vehicles were submitted for testing had led to a decrease in vehicles failing the checks.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To agree that Panel and Sub-Committee data is provided within a wider Compliance quarterly report in future.
3. To agree that future Taxi Licensing Quarterly reports will be anonymised so that they can be placed in the public domain.