

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report To: Licensing and Appeals Committee – 27 February 2017

Subject: Taxi Licensing Quarterly report and Service Update

Report of: Head of Building Control, Planning and Licensing

Summary

To inform the Committee of the work undertaken by the taxi licensing processing team during Qtr 2 2016/17 (July – Sept 2016) and provide an update on issues affecting currently service delivery.

Recommendations

That Members note the report.

That Members assist in communicating key messages at 5.5 in the report to licence applicants.

Wards Affected: All

| Community Strategy Spine | Summary of the contribution to the strategy |
|---|--|
| Performance of the economy of the region and sub region | Effective and well regulated licensing of drivers, vehicles and proprietors supports a higher standard of public transport offer to visitors and residents of the City, which in turn supports the economic vision for Manchester. |
| Reaching full potential in education and employment | Supporting applicants to gain employment |
| Individual and collective self esteem – mutual respect | Not applicable to the contents of this report |
| Neighbourhoods of Choice | Effectively applying regulations to the licensing of drivers, vehicles and proprietors to ensure those working and providing modes of transport within the City are of a high standard. |

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Risk Management
 - Legal Considerations
-

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background Documents

None.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Licensing Unit deals with approximately 11,000 hackney carriage and private hire applications each year. This report provides details of the work undertaken by and performance of the taxi licensing processing team.

1.2 This report details:

- Number of and type of applications processed within the team
- Number of new driver applicants who have taken the taxi licensing knowledge test during the same period and the subsequent results
- Number of private hire and hackney carriage vehicle inspections and pass and fail rates

2.0 Background

2.1 Under the local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 the Council has the authority to:

- Grant private hire and hackney carriage driver licences to persons who are deemed to be 'fit and proper'.
- Grant hackney carriage and private hire vehicle proprietor licences for vehicles that are deemed suitable.
- Grant private hire operator licences to persons who are deemed to be 'fit and proper'

2.2 The overriding priority of the Council is public safety.

Driver Application

Where on a new or renewal application (or during the currency of a licence) an individual has any convictions, cautions or other matters that require further consideration these are, under the delegated authority of the Council, referred to either The Panel or Sub-Committee.

Vehicle Application

The proprietor of a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle must purchase a vehicle that complies with the Manchester Conditions of Fitness and associated policies and must maintain the vehicle in such a condition so that it would, at any time, during the currency of the licence pass the Manchester vehicle inspection.

Private Hire Operator

The Operator must be a fit and proper person and the premises in which the business is to be run must also be suitable. Planning permission is normally required for a person to run a private hire operator business.

2.3 Where there are no issues applications are processed by the taxi licensing administration team. Where there are issues with an application, the matter is referred to a Principal Licensing Officer who, depending on the circumstances, will refer the matter to either The Panel or a Sub-Committee

3.0 Taxi Licensing Team Outputs

3.1 Table 1 - Number and type of applications processed

| | | Driver | Vehicle | Operator | DBS | Totals |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Qtr 1 (16/17) | April | 578 | 282 | 2 | 213 | 1057 |
| | May | 723 | 431 | 2 | 240 | 1396 |
| | June | 420 | 348 | 1 | 229 | 998 |
| | Totals | 1721 | 1061 | 5 | 682 | 349 |
| Qtr 2 (16/17) | July | 505 | 493 | 0 | 98 | 1096 |
| | Aug | 758 | 392 | 1 | 196 | 1347 |
| | Sept | 504 | 365 | 1 | 102 | 972 |
| | Totals | 1767 | 1250 | 2 | 396 | 3415 |

3.2 Table 2 – Number of applicants who have taken the taxi licensing knowledge test and the subsequent results

| | | Booked | | DNA | | Passed | | Failed | |
|------------------|---------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | | PH | HC | PH | HC | PH | HC | PH | HC |
| Qtr 1 (16/17) | April | 37 | 40 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 27 | 32 |
| | May | 50 | 45 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 11 | 39 | 28 |
| | June | 46 | 46 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 39 | 34 |
| | Totals | 133 | 131 | 13 | 17 | 13 | 20 | 105 | 94 |
| Qtr 2 (16/17) | July | 58 | 55 | 11 | 18 | 6 | 0 | 41 | 37 |
| | Aug | 90 | 44 | 25 | 15 | 14 | 1 | 51 | 28 |
| | Sept | 103 | 24 | 4 | 9 | 22 | 2 | 77 | 13 |
| | Totals | 251 | 123 | 40 | 42 | 42 | 3 | 169 | 78 |

3.3 Table 3 – Vehicle Inspection pass and fail rates

| | | Tests | HACKNEY CARRIAGE 2016/17 | | | | PRIVATE HIRE 2016/17 | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | | | FAIL | PASS | DNA 4/6/8 mth | DNA Annual | FAIL | PASS | DNA 4/6/8 mth | DNA Annual |
| Qtr 1 (16/17) | April | 953 | 165 | 78 | 17 | 5 | 264 | 350 | 49 | 22 |
| | May | 903 | 151 | 89 | 13 | 8 | 246 | 324 | 44 | 27 |
| | June | 980 | 158 | 91 | 11 | 5 | 259 | 385 | 52 | 17 |
| | Totals | 2836 | 474 | 258 | 41 | 18 | 769 | 1059 | 145 | 66 |

3.4 Vehicle Inspection Data relating to July/Aug/Sept is not currently available. This data will be provided on the next quarterly report.

4.0 Processing times

- 4.1 The length of time taken to process a new driver application up to the point of grant/refusal, is dependant on a number of variables, including the applicant providing all the correct documentation, making payment, the DBS agency providing a certificate, the applicant possibly needing to be referred to Sub-Committee and then the applicant passing various tests/checks. Therefore the length of time varies widely from case to case. What we can say is that it takes on average around 6 months for a new driver application to be determined (once the processing has begun), but it can be considerably shorter or longer. It is anticipated with the change onto a new Uniform software system that we will have the capability to provide more data in the future, showing average processing times from receipt to decision.
- 4.2 During Qtr 1 and Qtr 2 16/17, the time delay between the Licensing Unit receiving an application and beginning to process that application reduced considerably. During times of additional pressure on service delivery, resources will always be prioritised on processing existing licence holders renewal applications. The licence type most affected is usually the new driver applications, and the Unit acknowledges that during Qtr 1 (Apr – Jun) 16/17, new applicants were experiencing anything up to 16 weeks before their application began to be processed. Following a lot of service changes, this waiting time was reduced to 10 weeks wait by the end of Qtr 2 (Sept), and further still to just 3 weeks by the end of November 2016.
- 4.3 Table 4 shows the processing dates for the major application types, as of 30 November 2016:

| Licence Type | Date Unit working on: | Comment |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Driver Renewal | Up to date (non outstanding) | All licences due to expire in December had been processed (where received). Officers were processing any new renewal applications as they were received in the Unit (no waiting time) |
| New Driver Application | 10 November 2016 | Applicant waiting time for their application to be looked at was down to 3 weeks |
| Vehicle Renewal | 28 December 2016 | Officers were processing these applications up to a month in advance of expiry |
| New Vehicle Application | 25 November 2016 | Waiting time had been reduced for applicants to just 5 days |
| Vehicles beyond the age limit | Up to date (non outstanding) | Applications being processed as received into the Unit |
| Vehicle Transfers | Up to date (non outstanding) | Applications being processed as received into the Unit |

5.0 Service Updates

5.1 Online payments for all licence types

5.1.1 Payments related to all taxi licence applications are now made on-line. This has been a major change for the trade and it will take some time to bed in. The change, which was introduced on 1 October 2016, has caused some delays in processing applications due to clients failing to respond to the e-mail payments links sent by the Unit, causing additional administration tracking pending applications.

5.2 Immigration checks

5.2.1 As Members are aware, on 1 December 2016 the Immigration Act 2016 came into force. Members received a briefing on 5 December 2016, detailing the purpose of the Act and the duties placed on the Council to check individuals right to work in the UK and validate all documents face to face. The Act only requires authorities to conduct these checks with regards to drivers and operators, however the Unit proposes to go further and roll this out to vehicle proprietors once the other service changes have been fully implemented.

5.2.2 The introduction of this new system, which requires new and renewal applicants to attend an appointment at the town hall, with all relevant documentation, has had an impact on the time taken to process applications. Applicants often miss appointments or fail to bring all the right documentation and this causes delays, arranging further appointments and administratively tracking all pending applications until these checks are completed.

5.3 UNIFORM

5.3.1 On 8 December 2016, the Licensing Unit transferred its bespoke computer operating system from Lalpac to Uniform.

5.3.2 As with any change in systems there are some challenges with the introduction of new associated processes. This has presented some challenges and slight delays in delivering parts of the service.

5.3.3 Progress is being made to improve service delivery with further dedicated training. In addition key messages are being given to the trade on the Council Website and through the contact centre – (Members can assist by signposting enquiries about applications to the website where information should be updated weekly regarding where the Unit is up to with each licence application type)

5.4 Recruitment

5.4.1 On a short term basis some additional resource has been brought into the team to assist whilst the new system is being bedded in. Through natural turnover 2 officers who took a supervisory lead have left; a new officer has recently joined the unit and a second will commence on 20 March 2017.

Current processing times

The impact of these service changes on the processing times are shown below which was correct as of 15 February 2017:

| Licence Type | Feb 2017 dates: | Comment | Service Target: |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Driver Renewal | Up to date | All licences due to expire in February/March where the application has been received – have been processed. December had been processed Officers are processing any new renewal applications as they are received in the Unit. | To process these as they arrive in the Unit (up to a month ahead of expiry – dependent on application being received) |
| New Driver Application | November and December 2016 | We are still processing applications received throughout November and December 2016. Applications are all up to different stages due to the new ID checks and payment processes. | To begin processing these within 10 working days of receipt in the Unit (Process is - invite applicant to attend appt within 5 days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verify ID and docs • make payment immediately after appt • await DBS certificate • take tests • issue licence |
| Vehicle Renewal | 1 March 2017 | All renewal applications for vehicles expiring in Feb have received payment links and are being processed – now onto March | To process as they arrive in the Unit |
| New Vehicle Application | January 2017 | Working on applications received in January – payment links have been sent | To process within 10 working days of receipt in the Unit |
| Vehicles beyond the age limit | Up to date (non outstanding) | Applications being processed as received into the Unit | To process as received in the Unit |
| Vehicle Transfers | 2 nd February 2017 | Applications received 2 nd Feb onwards being processed | To process within 10 working days of receipt in the Unit |

5.5 Key messages

Members can assist officers when responding to queries from applicants with these key messages that were also communicated to Trade representatives at

meetings on 16 February 2017:

- Check the website before calling or emailing to chase an application at www.manchester.gov.uk/taxi
- Don't leave renewals until the last minute
- Ensure current email details provided and Check emails for payment links and make payment asap
- Keep to appointments and bring all requested documentation
- Make own records of expiry dates on all relevant documents
- Sign into the online DBS service on receipt of a new DBS at www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service

6.0 Garage and slot usage/availability

6.1 In July 2016 the garage implemented a new working pattern for vehicle inspectors, which has resulted in an increase in the provision of vehicle inspection tests.

6.2 A trade meeting was held with the trade on Thursday 16 February 2017 and it was evident that the issue of booking in of re-tests is a source of complaint and concern. Possible solutions to this will be explored with the garage facility make this process more efficient and customer friendly.

7.0 Service Workplan

7.1 It is acknowledged that work associated with the Units service plan has been delayed due to the challenges related to the implantation of the Immigration Act 2016 and the introduction of Uniform.

7.2 It is envisaged that work will re-commence in earnest in March/April of this year, with the first reports being brought before Committee in May 2017. The first priorities will be:

- A review of hackney carriage and private hire driver training and knowledge test with the emphasis on maintaining the current high standard that MCC has set and safeguarding.
- Private hire Operator applications and conditions

7.3 A revised work plan will be provided to the Committee in May 2017.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The report has provided a summary of the output activity of the Taxi Licensing Team in Quarter 2 of 2016/17 (April – June 2016).

8.2 The report outlines issues that have affected service delivery since the last report to Committee, and service plans going forward.