

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE

26 NOVEMBER 2012

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES

TAXI LICENSING

1. Purpose of Report.

To update Members of taxi driver and vehicle standards.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 This work links to the Corporate Improvement Objectives of:-

- Building safe and inclusive communities
- Creating vibrant and thriving towns

3. Background.

3.1 Members have requested a short summary report on pre-licensing checks for drivers and vehicles.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 Taxis in Bridgend provide a valuable service to the public. With a fleet of more than 400 cars and minibuses, a robust licensing policy and regular testing are vital to ensure vehicle safety. Taxis in the County Borough are tested up to three times a year at the Council's MOT testing station depending on the age of the vehicle. Vehicles are tested before licensing, and at six monthly intervals up to the age of five years. Beyond that, vehicles are tested every four months. This regime is supplemented by on the spot checks by Council licensing enforcement officers and our colleagues in the South Wales Police. Both have the power to issue suspension notices. Minor non compliances can happen at any time, although our driver education programme emphasises the importance of a driver carrying out a visual check of the vehicle before starting work. Vehicle mechanical failures are small in comparison with the number of tests undertaken. On receipt of a failure notice, the Licensing Section makes arrangements for re-testing and re-inspection of the taxi. Where relevant, the section managing school and social services contracts is also notified.

4.2 Taxi driving is a responsible job and the public rely on taxis for social and shopping trips as well as hospital appointments. Many taxis are also under contract to Bridgend County Borough Council to provide Home to School Transport. The Licensing Committee has approved a range of pre-licensing checks to offer assurance and confidence to the travelling public. For drivers, the foundation of this

is the Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check which is carried out before a licence is granted and every three years in line with national protocols.

- 4.3 Taxi drivers are also required to satisfy higher medical standards than an ordinary driver. The Committee requires new drivers to meet the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) Group 2 Vocational Standards – the same as those applied to bus and lorry drivers. These standards are also applied to any medical conditions which arise after a licence is granted. Finally, to support driver standards, all new drivers are required to attend a Driver Awareness Course. This is run in partnership with the South Wales Police and covers road safety, taxi law, customer care and disability training. Finally, all drivers since 2001 have been required to pass an additional driving test accredited by the Driving Standards Agency.
- 4.4 On receipt of an application, the Licensing team examines the Enhanced CRB certificate and copy driving licence produced by the applicant. To ensure administrative efficiency some applications will be dealt with under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and applications are assessed against current policy guidelines. The current guidelines for officer approval are that on the grant of a licence an applicant's Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure must be clear together with no more than three penalty points endorsed on the DVLA driving licence. On renewal of a licence, officers will normally grant where the applicant has no further cautions, criminal or civil convictions, or substantiated complaints and no more than three penalty points on the DVLA driving licence, since the last renewal of the licence.
- 4.5 The Committee has approved a comprehensive policy covering the criteria for the grant of licences to taxi drivers which includes sanctions for existing drivers. This statement of policy covers the licensing of ex-offenders and sets out the Council's approach to categories of offences relevant to the role of a taxi driver. Each report to Sub-Committee will outline the relevant policy guidance.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

- 5.1 None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no negative equality implications.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 There are no financial implications

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to note the above report.

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Background documents

Driver application pack available at www.bridgend.gov.uk

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Guidance Notes available at www.bridgend.gov.uk

Statement of Policy relating to the licensing of ex-offenders available at
www.bridgend.gov.uk