

Meeting of:	LICENSING COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	27 FEBRUARY 2024
Report Title:	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL TAXI TESTING REGIME
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY
Responsible Officer:	KIRSTY EVANS LICENSING TEAM MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	The report content has no direct effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	AN INFORMATION REPORT PROVIDING MEMBERS WITH AN UPDATE ON THE TAXI TESTING REGIME

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on the feasibility study in respect of Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) taxi testing regime.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council must be satisfied that a vehicle is in a suitable mechanical condition, safe and comfortable before issuing a licence.
- 2.2 The Council currently uses its powers under Section 50 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to require all vehicles to be presented to the Council's in-house MOT testing station at Ty Thomas Joint Vehicle Maintenance Facility, Newlands Avenue, Brackla Industrial Estate, Bridgend.
- 2.3 On 22 November 2022 the Licensing Committee heard representations from the taxi trade, through local Members and a petition of approximately 170 signatories, to open taxi testing in Bridgend County Borough Council to other MOT garages.

The specific request in the petition was to allow for testing in any MOT testing station.

- 2.4 During this meeting the Licensing Committee resolved to authorise officers to conduct a feasibility study on alternative models of discharging our statutory duties in respect of the testing and licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 Following the Committee meeting in November 2022, Licensing Officers from the Shared Regulatory Services attended the Management Board that is responsible for governance of the Ty Thomas testing facility to discuss the current agreement that exists between BCBC and South Wales Police. At this meeting, a discussion took place on the possibility of an early exit from the taxi testing agreement, but it was confirmed that the existing testing arrangements will run for the initial fixed term entered into between both parties, which expires in March 2025.

3.2 Due to this binding date, the feasibility study will now take place in the 2024-25 financial year. This will ensure that Members have the most up to date, relevant information to enable them to make an informed decision.

3.3 The feasibility study will consider four models:

- Proprietors obtain a MOT Certificate from any MOT testing station in the County Borough, and that the same testing station undertakes the additional taxi compliance check.
- Proprietors obtain a MOT Certificate from any MOT testing station in the County Borough but require a separate taxi compliance check to be undertaken in-house.
- Select an approved number of MOT testing stations to conduct MOT testing and/or taxi compliance checks.
- Retain the current in-house regime.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Income received in 2022-2023 by Ty Thomas through taxi test fees was £49,785. The feasibility study and consultation will encompass all financial implications of the options open to Members.

9. Recommendations

9.1 That Members note the contents of the report and await a feasibility report on alternative models of discharging our statutory duties in respect of the testing and licensing of taxis (hackney carriage and private hire vehicles).

Background documents

None.