

Meeting of:	LICENSING COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	12 FEBRUARY 2026
Report Title:	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL TAXI TESTING REGIME
Report Owner / Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member:	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:	To seek approval to consult with the taxi and private hire trade within Bridgend County Borough Council and other interested parties on the proposal to allow taxi and private hire vehicles to obtain an MOT and additional compliance test at any Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) approved MOT testing station or to retain the current regime of in-house testing at Ty Thomas Testing Centre.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to consult with the taxi and private hire trade, Ty Thomas Testing Centre and the Home to School Transport Department on the proposal to allow taxi and private hire vehicles to obtain an MOT and additional compliance test at any Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) approved MOT testing station or to retain the current regime of in-house testing.
- 1.2 This report sets out the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches.

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. This requirement is in place until March 2026.
- 2.3 On 22 November 2022 the Licensing Committee heard representations from the taxi and private hire trade, through local Members and a petition of approximately 170 signatories, to open taxi and private hire 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 Options for testing elsewhere were unable to be explored at the time due to a binding requirement for in-house testing.
- 2.5 On 11 March 2025, Cabinet delegated authority to the Licensing Committee for decision making in respect of taxi and private hire testing. This allows the Licensing Committee to decide whether to continue with in-house testing after March 2026 or to implement a new process.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Licensing Officers have identified two options for members to consider. These options are:
- 1) To retain the current in-house testing regime. This requires proprietors to obtain an MOT Certificate from Ty Thomas garage along with an additional taxi/private hire compliance check.
 - 2) To allow proprietors to obtain an MOT Certificate from a Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) approved MOT testing station in the County Borough, and that the same testing station undertakes an additional taxi/private hire compliance check.
- 3.2 Some authorities offer a hybrid approach whereby MOTs are carried out at any approved station and additional compliance checks are conducted separately by Licensing Officers. This has been investigated and ruled out as there is insufficient officer resource to be able to support this approach.
- 3.3 In-house testing has a number of advantages, which also act as disadvantages for allowing testing elsewhere, these include:
- **Consistency.** In-house testing allows the Licensing Authority to apply uniform standards consistently; when more than one testing station is permitted there is a higher risk of variation in the standards being applied.

- **Reduced risk of conflict of interest.** Independent in-house testing removes the commercial incentive some garages may have to pass vehicles which are not up to standard. For example, some operators have their own testing stations which could increase the risk of faults being overlooked.
- **Improved oversight and auditability.** Direct control of the testing process allows for better auditing, data collection and performance monitoring. For example, issues such as reoccurring faults and trends in vehicle failures are easier to investigate. In addition, currently stop notices are issued when vehicles fail tests which require the vehicle not to be used. Such notices would not be issued if testing was done elsewhere as we would not be notified if vehicles have failed testing.
- **Increased public confidence.** The public may have more confidence in a testing system that is independent from the trade, this public confidence could be lost by allowing testing elsewhere.
- **Income for Ty Thomas.** Ty Thomas charges £46 for a taxi/private hire MOT test, which results in an approximate income of £46,000 per year from the taxi trade. If testing was allowed elsewhere, although some proprietors may still choose to have their test done at Ty Thomas, the majority of this income would be lost.

3.4 Some disadvantages of in-house testing and advantages for allowing testing elsewhere include:

- **Capacity and scheduling constraints.** We are limited in the number of testing slots available to the taxi and private hire trade as Ty Thomas Testing Station carry out additional work for Bridgend County Borough Council and South Wales Police. Over time the number of slots available to the trade has reduced due to the capacity and resource restraints of Ty Thomas. If we were to move to testing elsewhere proprietors would have greater choice and flexibility of when to have a test carried out.
- **Reduced flexibility for proprietors.** Proprietors may need to travel further to the testing centre or adjust working hours, such as school runs, to attend tests. Allowing testing at other locations would give proprietors more flexibility to accommodate their existing commitments, enabling them to select a testing centre that suits their needs for example, one closer to their base.
- **Unable to carry out repairs.** As Ty Thomas are a local authority garage, they are unable to carry out repairs on vehicles, therefore if vehicles fail, proprietors must take them to another garage for the repair and then get them re-tested at Ty Thomas.

- **Administrative burden for the authority.** Allowing testing elsewhere could free up resources within both Ty Thomas Testing Centre and the Licensing Department.
- **Fees are set.** Competition between garages can help keep costs lower for proprietors and encourage better customer service. If testing was allowed elsewhere proprietors could shop around for the best deal.

3.5 Approval is sought from members to progress the options available to Committee to consultation with the taxi and private hire trade within Bridgend County Borough Council, Ty Thomas Testing Centre and the Home to School Transport Department.

3.6 Following consultation, a report setting out the consultation responses will be presented to the Committee for consideration and a determination to be made.

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 and Nature Implications

6.1 There are no climate change or nature 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 There will be financial implications for the authority depending on the option chosen for future provision. A decision to accept any DVSA approved MOT testing station would result in loss of income for the Ty Thomas Joint Vehicle Maintenance Facility.

8.2 The loss of income is estimated to be approximately £46,000. Fleet currently charge £46 per test, and we have around 500 vehicles licensed per year, with mostly 2 tests per year. This figure does not include retests, full retests or tests following stop notices.

8.3 There would be no financial implication if members were to choose to stay with in-house testing.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That members agree to consult with the taxi and private hire trade, the Home to School Transport Department, and Ty Thomas on the following options with regards to taxi and private hire testing within Bridgend County Borough Council:
- i) To retain the current in-house testing regime. This requires proprietors to obtain an MOT Certificate from Ty Thomas Joint Maintenance Facility along with an additional taxi compliance check.
 - ii) To allow proprietors to obtain an MOT Certificate from any DVSA approved MOT testing station in the County Borough, and that the same testing station undertakes an additional taxi compliance check.

Background documents

None.