

OVERVIEW OF LICENSING 2020 - 2021

Executive Summary

This report has been drafted to provide the Licensing Committee with an overview of the Licensing Department's work in 2020 – 2021. This year has followed on from last years unprecedented year which no one could have predicted. As such, the report outlines some of the steps taken by the department to continue to work during the pandemic and adapt our processes moving forward together with usual statistics and overview of the year.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Joanne McIntosh, Legal Services Manager
Tel: 01483 743038, Email: Joanne.McIntosh@woking.gov.uk

Matthew Cobb, Senior Licensing Officer
Tel: 01483 743650, Email: Matthew.Cobb@woking.gov.uk

Contact Person: Joanne McIntosh, Legal Services Manager
Tel: 01483 743038, Email: Joanne.McIntosh@woking.gov.uk

Matthew Cobb, Senior Licensing Officer
Tel: 01483 743650, Email: Matthew.Cobb@woking.gov.uk

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been drafted to provide the Licensing Committee with an overview of the Licensing Department's work in 2020 – 2021. As 2020 proved to be an unprecedented year which no one could have predicted, this report outlines some of the many steps taken by the department to continue to work during the pandemic and adapt our processes moving forward together with usual statistics and overview of the year.
- 1.2 The department has taken steps to assist drivers and businesses to continue to work where possible and provide advice on the new Covid regulations. To this regards, it has worked closely with Environmental Health and Surrey Police.

2.0 Implications

Financial and Risk

- 2.1 None arising from this report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 2.2 None arising from this report.

Legal

- 2.3 The Council is the licensing authority for the purposes of the Licensing Act 2003, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Policing and Crime Act 2017 for matters such as Premises Licences and Taxi and Private Hire.

3.0 Corporate Strategy

- 3.1 The Council's statutory responsibilities contribute to promoting a strong and vibrant economy and the protection of the local and travelling public.

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1 None.

Overview of the year

Following the drastic changes made in the 2019/2020 year which allowed the Licensing Authority to ensure it was maintaining standards whilst also minimising interruption to the drivers (see the "Overview of Licensing 2019-2020" from the October 2020 Licensing Committee for further information) we have continued to work hard to keep the balance, allowing us to ensure a high level of services and the safety of the travelling public.

	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-20
Driver Applications received	9	18	29	37	18	17	14	9	13
Driver Licences issued	21	18	28	23	20	14	25	15	16
Vehicle Applications received	67	52	62	47	36	41	58	27	28
Vehicle Licences issued	68	49	62	45	35	41	58	27	35
Premises Licences	9	10	7	7	2	6	7	4	10
Personal Licences	4	8	1	2	1	2	4	2	7
Temporary Event Notices	4	6	4	4	1	0	1	3	10

Current drivers	587
Current vehicles	487
Current licenced premises	246
Current licenced clubs	38
Current personal licence holders	1341
Current pending premises licences	6
Current pending drivers apps	63
Current pending vehicles apps	0

Deferments due to Covid

Prior to the Covid pandemic, there were a few deadlines coming in for the introductions of policies and requirements that had been decided in the years previously. With everything that is going on, and specifically in relation to the Government Lockdown having a serious effect on the Taxi and Private Hire trade, it has been agreed to defer the introduction of the following policies in order to allow the trade a bit of breathing space. It should be noted that these are not cancelled, and it is still the intention to implement them as and when things return to some sense of normality.

- Introduction of Knowledge test for Operators
- Hackney Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Requirements
- BTEC Course completion requirement
- Requirement for door signs to be permanent vinyl

Points system

Following decision by the Licensing Committee to implement the Points System, this has been done so and the Licensing Authority over the last year has had cause to issue a total

of eleven sets of points to a total of eight drivers. The majority of these are for minor offences such as

- Leaving a Hackney Carriage unattended on the rank
- Littering
- Smoking in a licenced vehicle
- Poor or dangerous driving
- Waiting in a disabled bay for extended periods

However it should be noted that there are currently four cases where the actions of the driver have been unacceptable (to an extent that it warranted the issue of 12 points automatically) or repetitive (choosing to ignore the issue of points) and as such we are in the process of bringing four drivers to Licensing Sub-Committees in the near future.

At this time it is difficult to tell whether or not the Points System will work – as only time will tell if the Drivers pay heed to the Points they are issued, and amend their ways – or whether they will choose to ignore the warnings and continue acting inappropriately. The Points system is due for review in October 2021 and a report will be taken to the Licensing Committee accordingly at that time.

ARG grants for drivers

The Licensing Department has been working alongside the Finance Department under Leigh Clarke and Chris White, and with the assistance of the Revenues Department and the IT Department, have worked towards the implementation of a grant scheme following the announcement of Government financial support for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers.

The aim of the Grant is to provide some level of financial assistance to cover business costs for those trades who have suffered as a result of the Covid Pandemic. The aim of this is not to provide remunerations for any lost custom or loss of earnings – but to provide some financial aid aimed to cover the costs of licences etc. required to maintain a licence.

On the 18th of May 2021 emails were sent to all licenced drivers to notify them of the application to claim £750, as long as they were a) currently licenced and b) licenced on the 1st of April 2021. Due to Central Government deadlines, the drivers were given until the 31st of May 2021 to complete the application.

Naturally we received a huge number of applications and the Licensing Team has worked hard to process these applications, checking personal and banking details to allow the Finance Department to allocate the money. At the time of writing this report, the first 280 drivers have been paid by the Finance Department. (280 drivers at £750 = £210,000)