
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE 10/12/18

Present: Councillors Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Edgar Wyn Owen, Jason Wayne Parry, Angela Russell, Elfed W. Williams and Gareth Williams

Also in Attendance: Gareth Jones (Senior Planning and Public Protection Manager), Gwenan Mai Roberts (Licensing Manager), Geraint Brython Edwards (Solicitor) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Eryl Jones-Williams, Sion Jones and Peter Read

A concern was highlighted about the attendance of some Members. It was noted that the matter had been referred to the Monitoring Officer and the Democratic Services Manager.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2018, as a true record.

5. GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

Submitted, for information, the minutes of a meeting of the General Licensing Sub-committee that took place on 10.09.2018 and 17.10.2018

6. REVIEWING ARRANGEMENTS FOR MECHANICAL TESTS OF TAXI VEHICLES

A report was submitted by the Head of the Environment Department recommending new arrangements for testing hackney and private hire vehicles over 10 years old. It was highlighted that it was a requirement that every hackney and private hire vehicle had a standard MOT test annually, with an additional requirement for two mechanical tests once the vehicles reached 10 years old. It was emphasised that these tests were vital for ensuring the safety of taxi vehicles. It was noted that these requirements are incorporated as licensing conditions and had been adopted in the Council's taxi vehicle licensing policy. The requirements were also based on the advice in the Ministry of Transport's good practice guidance.

It was noted, due to concerns over controlling the standard and consistency of mechanical tests, that a number of Councils authorised garages that served the Authority's fleet vehicles to undertake the mechanical tests on licensed vehicles. It was added that this would be advantageous as it would be possible to keep a tight control on the standards and that it was also an opportunity to generate income for the Council.

In response to a question regarding the number of mechanical tests required over the next 12 months on vehicles, it was noted that conducting two tests on vehicles over 10 years old had been included in the numbers contained in the report. It was added that the Council garages were eager to participate in the arrangements, and in order to avoid undue pressure on them, it was proposed that three other garages were authorised as 'reserve' garages during busy periods. It was noted that initial discussions had already taken place with the Royal Mail to use its garage in Bangor as one of the reserve garages as the Royal Mail adhered to national standards in relation to fleet testing. The other two garages had not yet been identified.

In response to a question about the requirements of the second test, it was explained that it was broader than a general MOT and that it would include, for example, the condition of the car, signage, safety belts and first aid provision. It was noted that the check-list was extensive.

In response to a question regarding the age threshold for the use of a car as a taxi, it was noted that 12 years was the period, and that this was under review.

In response to an observation about monitoring the standards of the 16 garages (across Gwynedd) that had been authorised to conduct the tests, it was noted that checks were held by a licensing officer. All garages qualified to offer MOTs also had to comply with VOSA (Vehicle and Operator Services Agency) requirements.

One member was concerned that some taxi companies would deviate from the arrangements, but it was confirmed that it would continue to be mandatory for cars up to 10 years old to be tested by one of the 16 authorised garages. It was reiterated that it would be mandatory for vehicles over 10 years old to be tested by one of the Authority garages.

RESOLVED to accept the recommendation and to approve the new arrangements for the testing of vehicles over 10 years old.

- **That cars over 10 years old that require two mechanical tests per annum are referred to the Council garages at Cibyn, Pwllheli and Dolgellau for the tests.**
- **That three other garages are authorised as 'reserve' garages during the periods when Council garages are too busy to undertake the tests.**
- **That a procedure is established to enable vehicle owners to be able to make arrangements and pay to have vehicle tests in Council garages via a self-service electronic form.**
- **That a discussion takes place with the Royal Mail's vehicle testing centre in Llandygai in order to try and find out if they would be interested in offering a taxi vehicle testing service.**

- That Council garages continue to receive cars for testing occasionally that are randomly referred by the Licensing enforcement officer, in accordance with the inspection powers under section 68 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976; whatever the age of the vehicle.
- That it is intended that the arrangement will be operational from April 2019
- That vehicles under 10 years old continue to be tested in accordance with the current procedure.

7. INFORM THE COMMITTEE OF THE NEXT STEPS IN RELATION TO DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW UNIFIED TAXI LICENSING POLICY

A verbal update was provided, noting that the unified policy was still being developed, with the intention of submitting a draft in March. It was intended to establish a task and finish group to examine the main aspects of the Unified Taxi Licensing Policy prior to the public consultation. It was also noted that it was intended to establish a terms of reference for the group.

The information was ACCEPTED.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 10.30 am

CHAIRMAN