

LICENSING COMMITTEE
29/10/2024 at 9.30 am



Present: Councillor S. Hussain (Chair)
Councillors Azad, Bishop, Byrne, Chowhan, Cosgrove,
Hamblett, Hindle, J. Hussain, Nasheen, Sheldon and
Shuttleworth

Also in Attendance:
Sumayya Rawat- Solicitor
John Garforth- Service Manager - Security, CCTV & Licensing
Susan Loftus- Licensing Projects and Hearings Officer
Durga Paul- Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Islam.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for the meeting to consider.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th June
2024 be approved as a correct record.

6 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

RESOLVED that, Cllr J Hussain is appointed as Vice Chair of
the Licensing Committee.

7 **LICENSING UPDATE**

The Licensing Committee received an update on the activities of
the Licensing Team since April 2024 outlining the challenges
and demands on the service.

Alcohol, Entertainment and Late Night Refreshment

Members heard that there has been one hearing since April
2024 and the application was granted with conditions.

Taxi and Private Hire

Officers stated that there have been 906 new applications
received for dual driver licences since April 2024. The
Committee received some comparative data on the active
Licences between May 2023 and April 2024 and significant
increases across most Licence types were identified.

In response to member questioning, Officers explained that the
only decrease was in Private Hire Operator Licences, and this

was likely because some operators had merged reducing total numbers.

Members heard that the significant increase in licensed drivers has placed an additional burden on Officers within the team and a recruitment exercise is underway. The additional vehicles being licensed has also meant an increase in testing capacity at the testing station is required. A third bay is currently being built and then extra test slots will be available for booking. Officers are also working towards the implementation of a new service database and front facing driver application and account system which will improve efficiency and speed.

Upon Member questioning, Officers explained that the current Lead time is 3 weeks currently and they expect this to reduce with the opening of the new testing bay.

Members queried whether a third bay would be sufficient, and if there was a need to expand further to add a fourth bay. Officers explained that this is something that would be closely monitored.

The Committee were given an overview of the current statistics for Vehicle Tests since April 2024 and Officers confirmed that the pass rate is 64% with the main reasons for failures being Brakes, Suspension, Tyres and Condition of interior.

Members expressed concern at some of the serious problems identified in vehicles where tests failed. They queried whether the driver was permitted to stay on the road following a failed test. Officers explained that drivers were not permitted on the roads and their Taxi Licence was suspended until issues were rectified.

Members questioned whether there is a mechanism when repeat offenders can be identified. Officers explained that patterns of behaviour are monitored but not on a large scale, and this is something they would take away and look at.

The Committee were provided with a breakdown of the outcomes of 36 Hearings before the Drivers Panel that have taken place since April 2024 and results of a Vehicle compliance operation was undertaken in partnership with Greater Manchester Police and VOSA. Officers noted that a new operation would be taking place in the future with larger numbers as the last one was small but successful. Although, this would require support from other agencies who have the power to stop drivers.

RESOLVED that, the Licensing Update be noted by the Committee.

TAXI POLICY

The Licensing Officer provided a summary of the updated Taxi Policy for the approval of the Committee. An amendment to the

current policy is sought in relation to the production of driving licences as part of the application process.



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The current policy states: Applicants must have held a full GB or EU driving licence for at least two years when applying for a licence. If you do not fall into the categories above and you have a foreign driving licence you must have held a valid licence for at least two years, of which 12 months must have been GB or EU. The two years commences from the issue date of the licence, rather than the date of passing the test.

It is requested that reference to EU licences is removed on the grounds that driving licence status checks on offences and endorsements cannot be carried out on EU licences. Therefore, going forward is request that the policy states that all applicants must have a UK licence to enable checks to be conducted.

It is further requested that existing licence holders who are operating on a UK driving licence must transfer to a UK licence before the expiry of their current dual drivers' licence issued by this authority.

RESOLVED that, the Licensing Committee approve the changes to the Taxi Policy.

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GAMBLING POLICY

The Licensing Committee heard how the current Gambling Policy was adopted in January 2022 and must be reviewed every three years by law. The content of the policy centres around the regulatory responsibilities of both operators and the Council in how it administers the gambling system.

Significant attention has been paid to the public health concerns surrounding gambling addiction in the revised policy. Data suggest that in Oldham there are around three thousand problem gamblers and nine thousand at risk gamblers. A Greater Manchester Gambling Harm Reduction Strategy has been compiled with funding allocated to support pathways and research.

The proposed policy was shared with all responsible authorities under the Act together with a range of operators covering the different licensed regimes. Responses were received from Public Health and the Fire Service who suggested some amendments which have been incorporated into this final version.

Members queried whether Gambling Premises in Oldham are equipped to address Public Health Concerns. Officers explained that the number of betting shops in Oldham has reduced due to independent shops being bought out by larger chains which are adequately trained and equipped.

RESOLVED that, the Licensing Committee note the report and approve its submission to Council.

The meeting started at 9.33am and ended at 11.03am.

