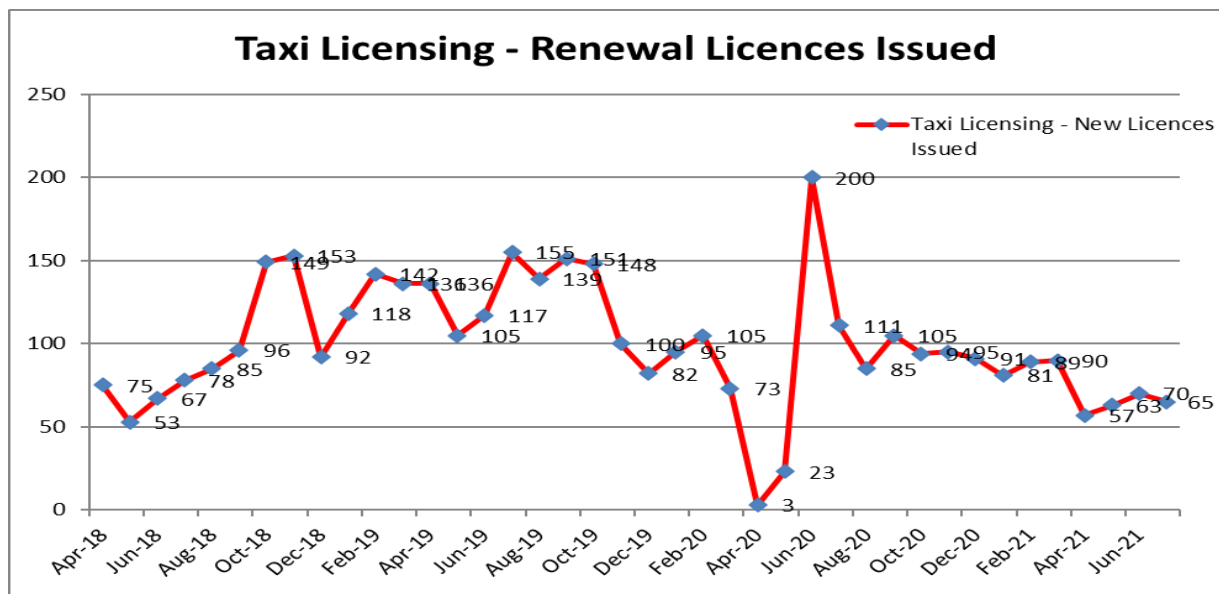


## Taxi Licensing Update - Licensing Committee – August 2021

### 1.0 Licensed Drivers

On 19 July 2021 the final stage of the Governments roadmap out of lockdown was implemented, step 4, with additional hospitality businesses being able to open and social distancing measures being reduced. This and other measures have resulted in increased footfall in our high streets, boosting the taxi industry. As a result, drivers are reporting higher levels of business, however the number of licensed drivers fell again in July 2021 making it 12 consecutive months of reducing driver numbers. The fall in drivers and vehicles is being seen at a national level as drivers move into the more stable delivery industry.

New driver and vehicle applications have fallen since the start of the pandemic; however the team are starting to see a recovery in numbers of new applicants but so far this is not sufficient to cover those leaving the industry. As a result the team processed 18 new licence applications and 65 renewals during July 2021 as you can see from the graphs below these volumes are down on those seen historically. It should be noted that the reducing number of licence applicants and holders will reduce the Council's income from taxi licensing in the short term, however the team do expect this to bounce back as part of the wider economic recovery. Taxi Licensing have introduced new processes for driver licence renewal since Covid-19 came to light which allows licences to be renewed remotely, negates the need for the driver to attend the Council office and allows them to provide documents electronically thus making the process far more efficient.



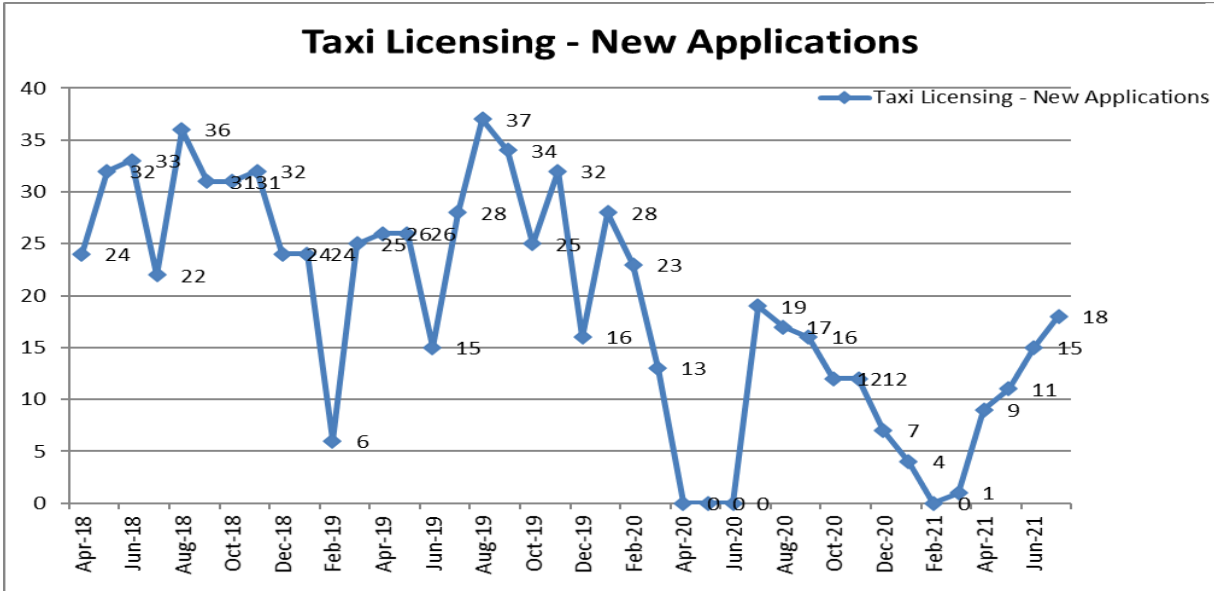


Figure 2 below shows the total number of licensed hackney carriage drivers in Wiltshire and their location.

The total number of licensed hackney carriage drivers at the end of July 2021 was 742, a decrease of 3 on the previous month. 154 were licensed in the North area, 85 in the East, 303 in the South and 200 in the West.

Over the year April 2019 to April 2020 the number of hackney carriage drivers fell 44, the number of private hire drivers rose by 12 over the same period, giving an overall fall in driver numbers of 32. However, if we look at the period since the pandemic commenced, we have seen a reduction in hackney carriage drivers of 118 over the period March 2020 to July 2021, representing a fall of 14%, this appears to be in line with the national average, however hackney carriage driver numbers have been falling for twelve consecutive months.

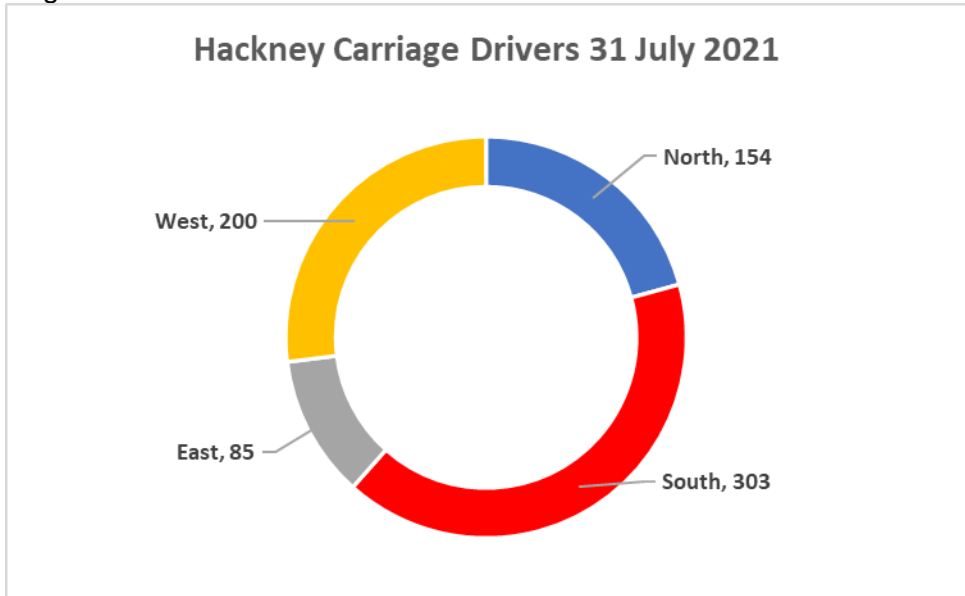
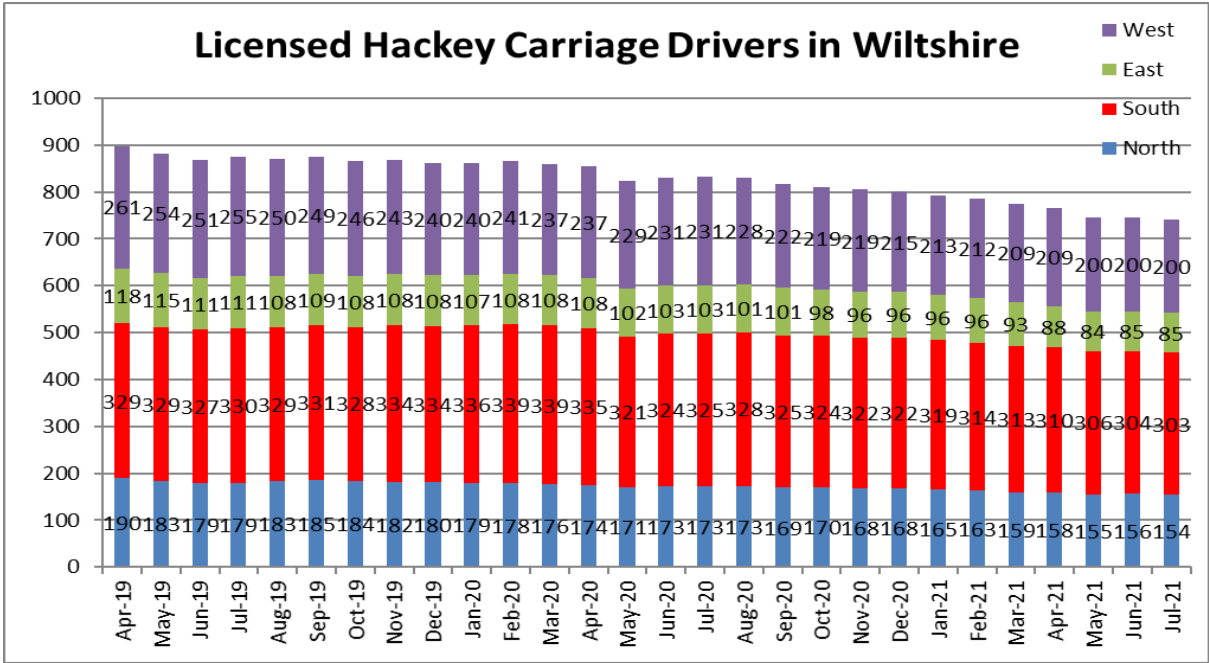


Fig.2

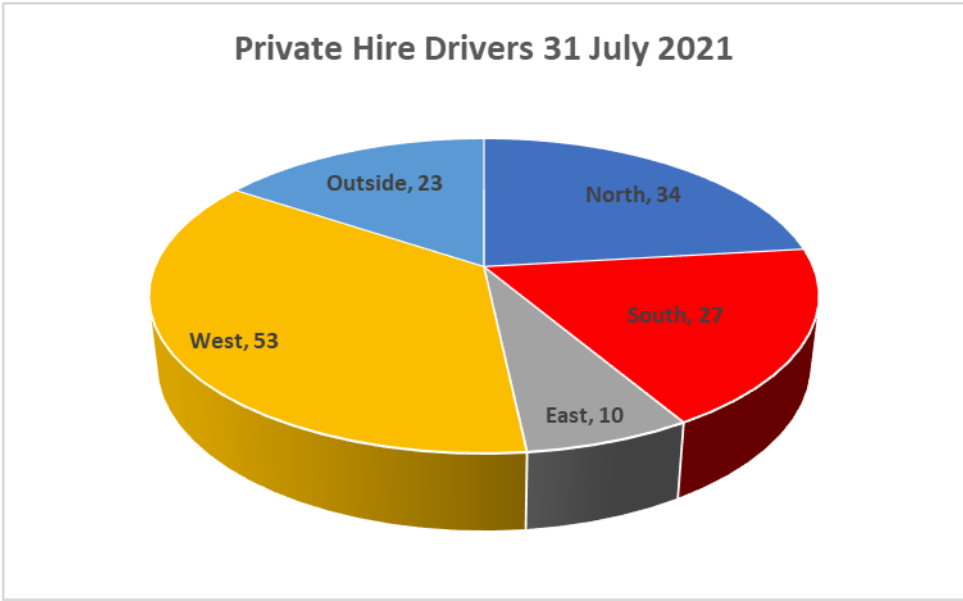
The graph below shows the monthly variation in hackney carriage driver numbers during 2019/20 and 2021/22. During July 2021 numbers fell by 3, numbers in the North fell by 2, the South fell by 1 and the East and West stayed the same when compared to the previous month.

Since April 2019 Hackney Carriage driver numbers have fallen in all areas, down 61 in the West, 36 in the North, 33 in the East and 26 in the South. The West is clearly the worst affected area.

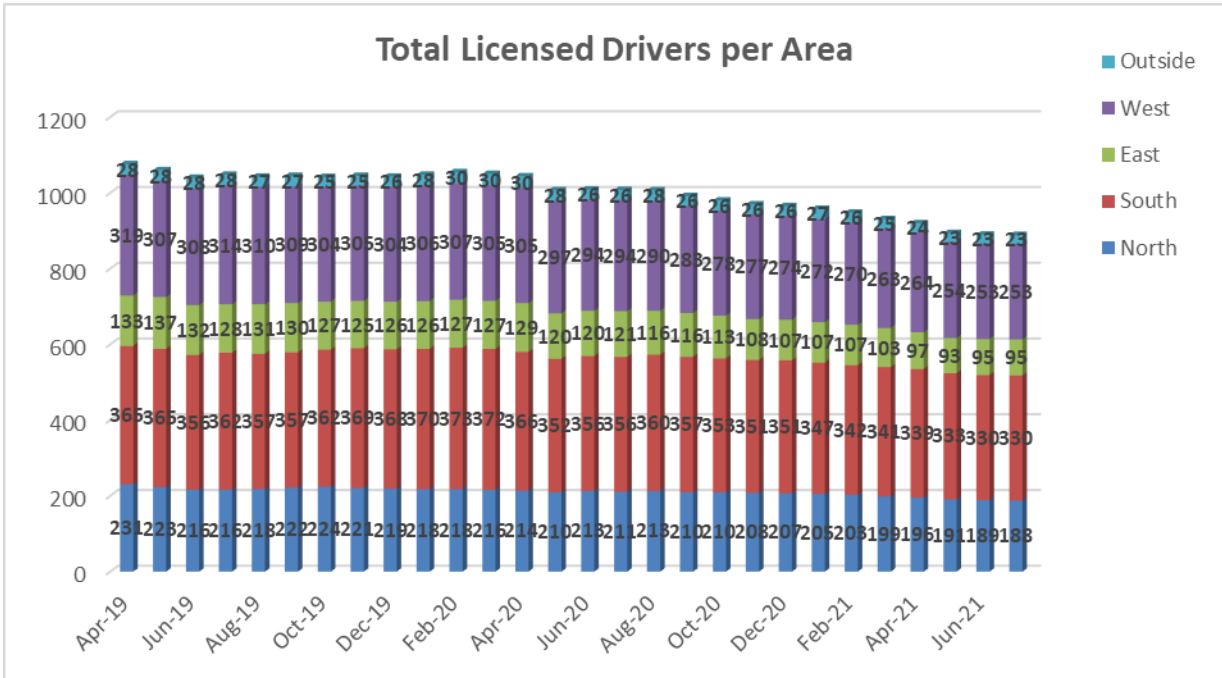


The team also license private hire only drivers, these totalled 147 as at the end of July 2021, an increase of 2 over the month, bringing the total number of drivers licensed to 889, a reduction of 1 over the month.

Private Hire drivers are not restricted by zone and can take bookings for anywhere in the Country. It is interesting to note that we have more private hire drivers living outside of the county than in the east of the county and in equal numbers with the South area. For information the area in which the private hire drivers are registered is as follows;



The graph below shows total driver numbers since April 2019.



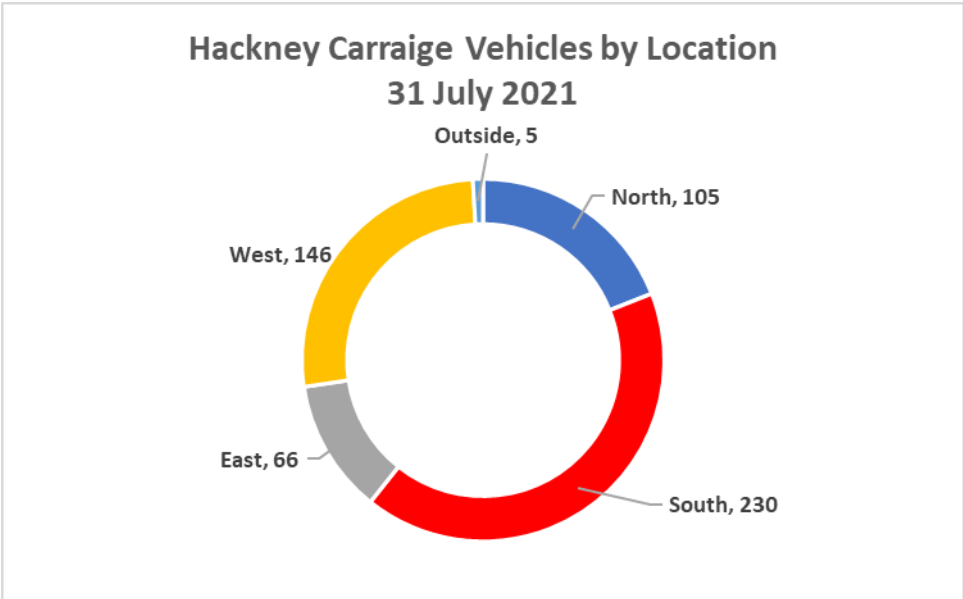
Since April 2019 the number of hackney carriage drivers has fallen by 156 and the number of private hire drivers has fallen by 31, an overall fall of 187 drivers or 17%. However 161 or 86%, of the reduction of 187 drivers has occurred since the first national lockdown in March 2020 as a result of Covid-19. The team are working with the Council’s passenger transport unit as falling numbers of licensed drivers may impact the Council’s ability to fulfill all of its contracts, however the trend in the industry is nationwide and may take time to correct itself.

**2.0 Licensed Vehicles**

At the end of July 2021 the taxi licensing team licensed a total of 768 vehicles, down 9 on the previous month. This is the ninth month in ten that vehicle numbers have fallen. The impact of lockdown and the Covid restrictions has taken effect and vehicle numbers had dropped for 8 consecutive months prior to May 2021, it is hoped numbers are now stabilising. The vehicle split is as follows, 552 hackney carriage vehicles and 216, private hire vehicles, an decrease of 5 hackney carriage vehicles and 4 private hire vehicle over the month when compared to the previous month. Of the 768 vehicles licensed 13.6% or 105 vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

It should be noted that 30% of licensed private hire vehicles are wheelchair accessible compared to 7% of hackney carriage vehicles, this reflects the type of work each type of vehicle undertakes.

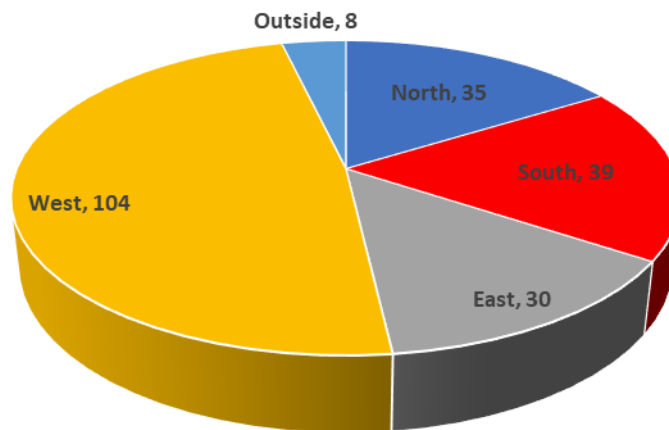
The chart below shows the location split of all hackney carriage vehicles and the area in which they are registered.



The team also license private hire only vehicles, as advised above these totalled 216 as at the end of July 2021.

Private Hire drivers are not restricted by zone and can take bookings for anywhere in the Country if they wish. For information the area in which the private hire vehicles are registered is as follows;

**Private Hire Vehicles by Location 31 July 2021**



Between April 2019 and July 2021 the total number of licensed vehicles, hackney carriages and private hire vehicles decreased by 187. The number has reduced by 161 or 17% since the first Coronavirus lockdown was announced in March 2020, this is in line with national trends but demonstrates the devastating impact that Covid-19 is having on the industry.

### 3.0 Enforcement actions

The team proactively enforces Council policy and legislation in relation to taxis, ensuring we have a visible presence on the ranks. This has resulted in more enforcement and more penalty points and formal notices issued. The team issued penalty points on 24 occasions during March 2021, the highest monthly total ever recorded. The enforcement officers also undertook drive by inspections and rank visits within our towns to identify potential issues.

Penalty points were issued 7 times during July 2021, to 5 drivers and 2 vehicles. The vehicles were issued penalty points for having no road tax.

The drivers were issued points for the following reasons;

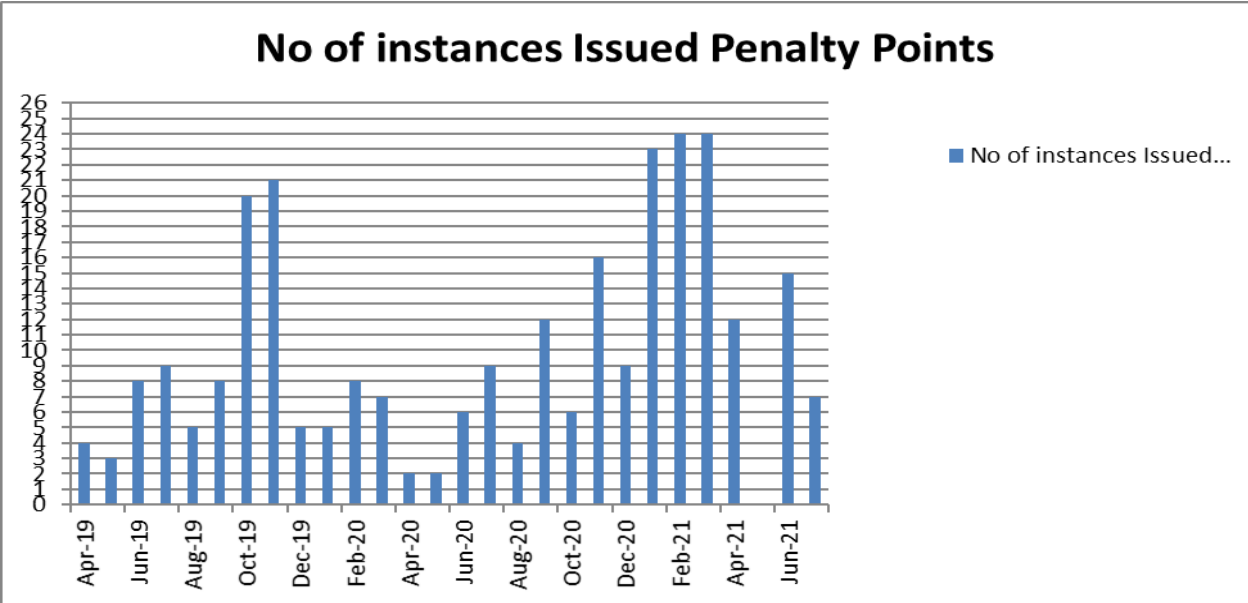
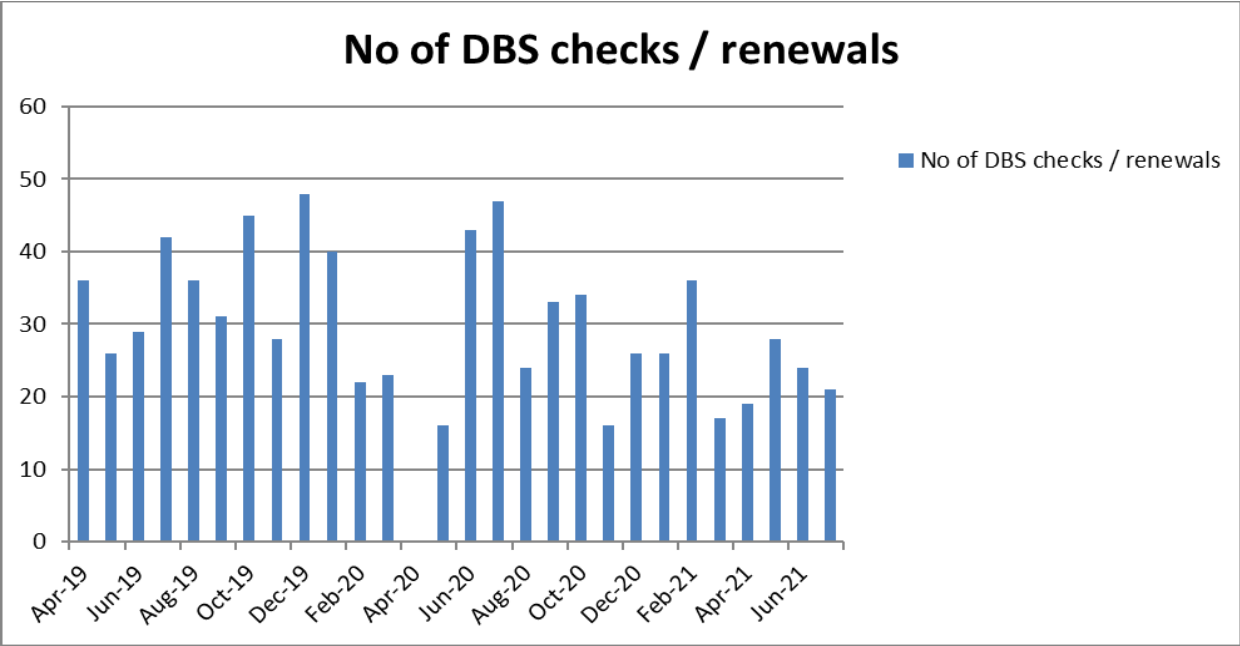
- 2 – No road tax
- 1 – Failure to display their badge
- 1 – Leaving the vehicle unattended on a rank
- 1 – Parking in a disabled bay

The Council operates an internal penalty points scheme under which a driver's licence will be reviewed if they reach 12 points in a rolling 12-month period.

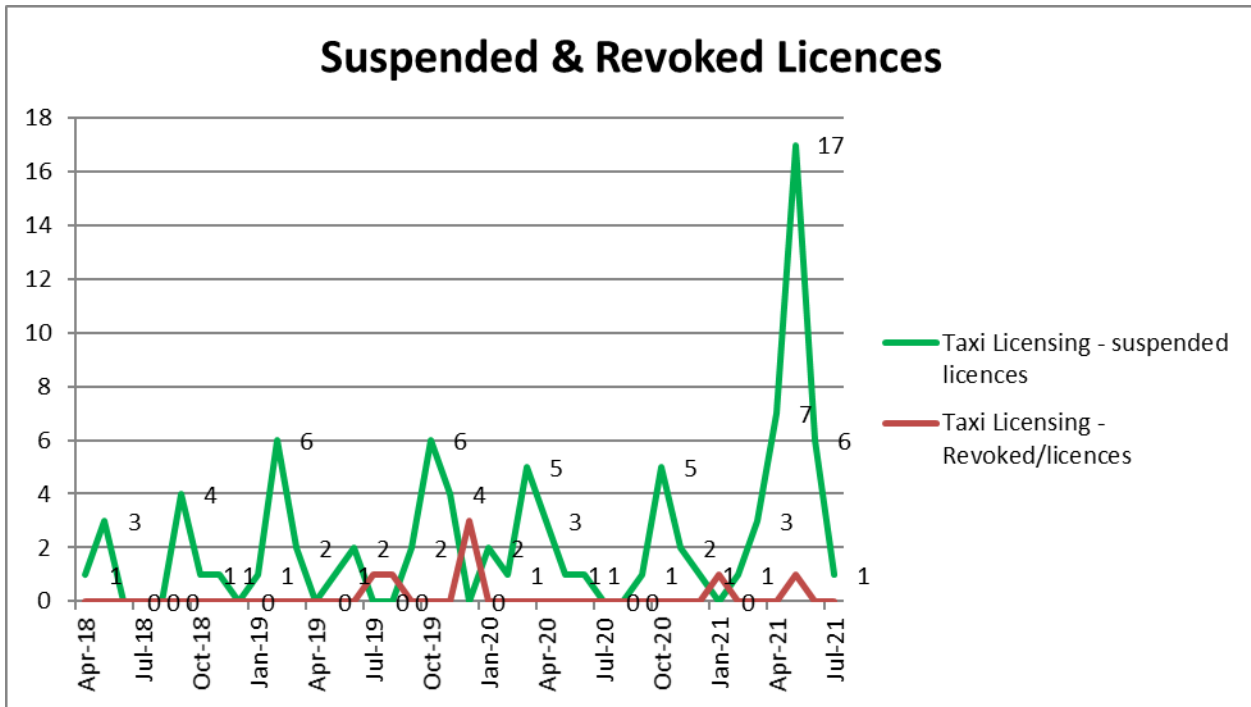
The graph below shows a trend of increased enforcement as the team effectively manage our driver database.

The Team suspended one driver and revoked none during July 2021.

The team also completed 21 DBS checks during July 2021.







The team operates a robust fit and proper person policy which was approved by the Councils Licensing Committee on 03 September 2019. The new policy came into effect on 01 October 2019 and incorporates guidance from the Institute of Licensing and reflects the recommendations proposed in the recent central government consultation on improving safeguarding with the taxi industry.

On 27 January 2020 the team received permission from the Council's Licensing Committee to undertake a public consultation on a new schedule of fares and tariffs for Hackney Carriages. The previous schedule had not changed since 2015 and the proposal follows work with the industry representatives and the late-night economy in Wiltshire. The consultation ran until 20 February 2020 and a report has been compiled to summarise findings. The implementation will be delayed until 2021/22 and a briefing note has been provided to the Licensing Committee for the September 2021 meeting to provide an update on the proposals.

The team continue to work on updated driver and vehicle guidelines in line with the above policy and central government guidance which will further enhance standards within Wiltshire for the benefit of service users and the industry in general. The team are considering the impact of the 2020 Environment Bill which will place requirements on Local Authorities to manage air quality and this will be factored into a future vehicle policy and our guidelines around vehicle age and emissions. The team are also working with Fleet Services to review the options to reduce emissions within the County's taxi fleet and promote the move to electric vehicles, this work will be undertaken in line with the Council's agreed fleet strategy. The Council provides DEFRA with vehicle data via a weekly upload to fulfil its obligations under the 2019 Air Quality Regulations. The team are also working on a number of initiatives examples of these include a review of the Council's taxi licensing fees, possible implementation of English tests and new safeguarding training as well as evaluating the impact of making CCTV mandatory in taxis and the implementation of a recognised driver qualification.



The team continue to review Government guidance issued in July 2020 on industry standards and will amend current processes and guidelines or seek Licensing Committee approval to do so during 2021, this may involve the Licensing Committee taking a more active role in decisions to revoke or suspend driver or vehicle licences.

The current Coronavirus pandemic has hit the taxi industry very hard with business volumes initially dropping 80% overnight and threatening the very existence of a number of operators and drivers. This has been seen in month-on-month reductions in driver and vehicle numbers, however our falls of 17% for drivers and 17% for vehicles are in line with other local authorities, some of which have reported falls of up to 20%.

The Taxi Licensing Team believe the industry will recover and it will be vital for the Council to support the sector in anyway it can to help the recovery.

**Tom Ince**  
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**August 2021**

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