

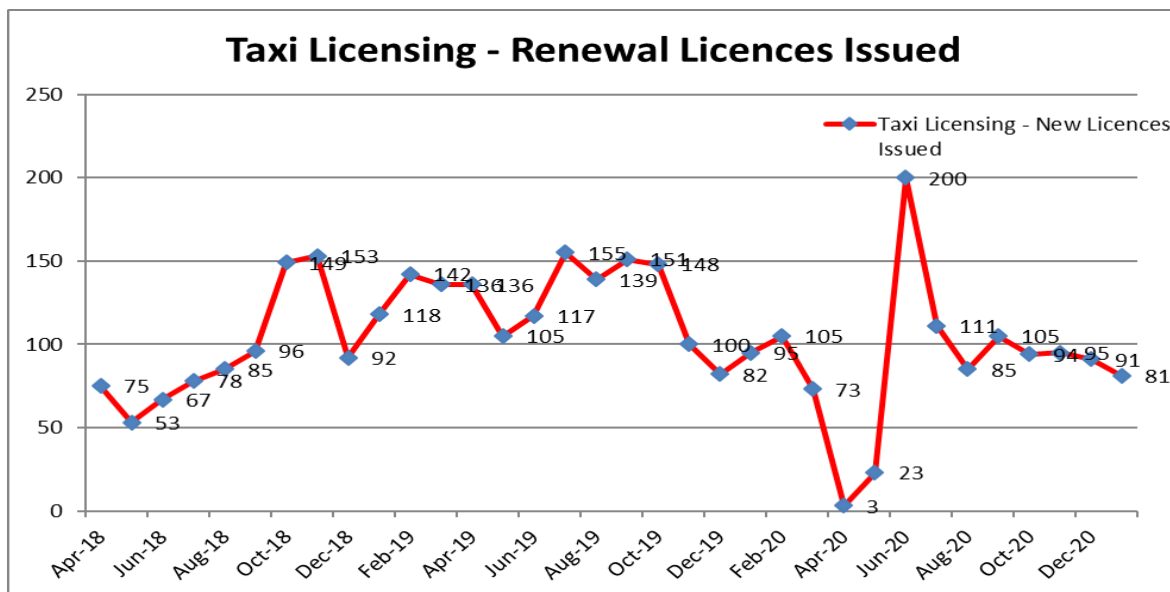
Taxi Licensing Update for Licensing Committee – February 2021

1.0 Licensed Drivers

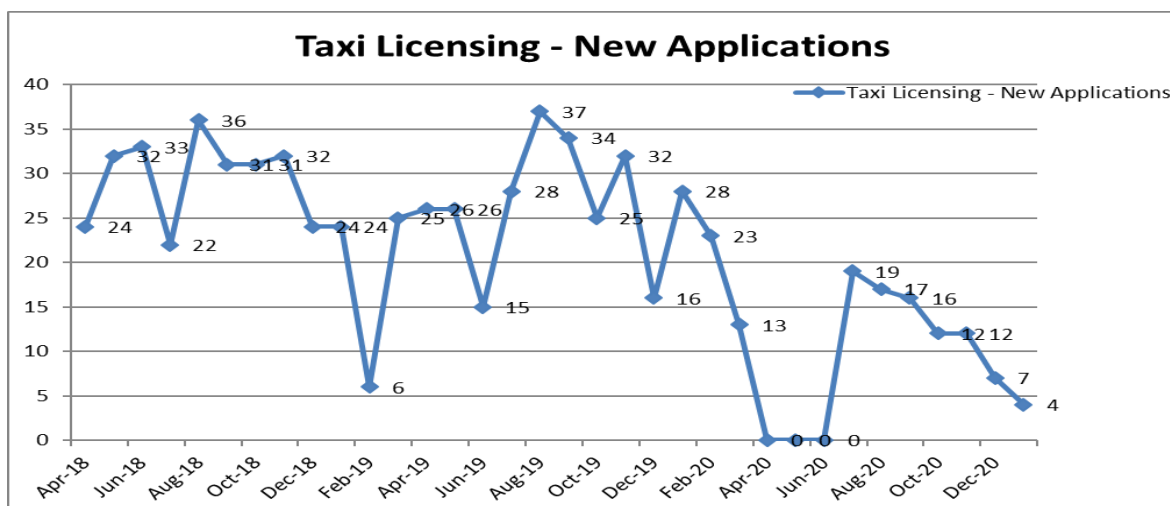
1.1 Covid-19 has presented the taxi industry with challenging conditions during 2020 and 2021. The announcement of the first lockdown on 23 March 2020 saw business levels drop significantly for the industry. Operators and drivers reported an 80% fall of business within the first week of the first lockdown. The second and third national lockdowns have continued to impact on the industry and driver and vehicle numbers continue to fall.

1.2 Due to the announcement of Lockdown 3, starting on 04 January 2021 the team cancelled all face to face appointments for new drivers between 04 January and 22 February 2021. The team have devised Covid secure processes for both driver and vehicle licence renewals which has allowed these licence renewals to continue unchanged through the third lockdown, minimising the impact of drivers and vehicle owners. The team will continue with the driver renewal process adopted under Covid, which negates the need for the driver to attend the office and allows them to provide documents electronically making the process far more efficient.

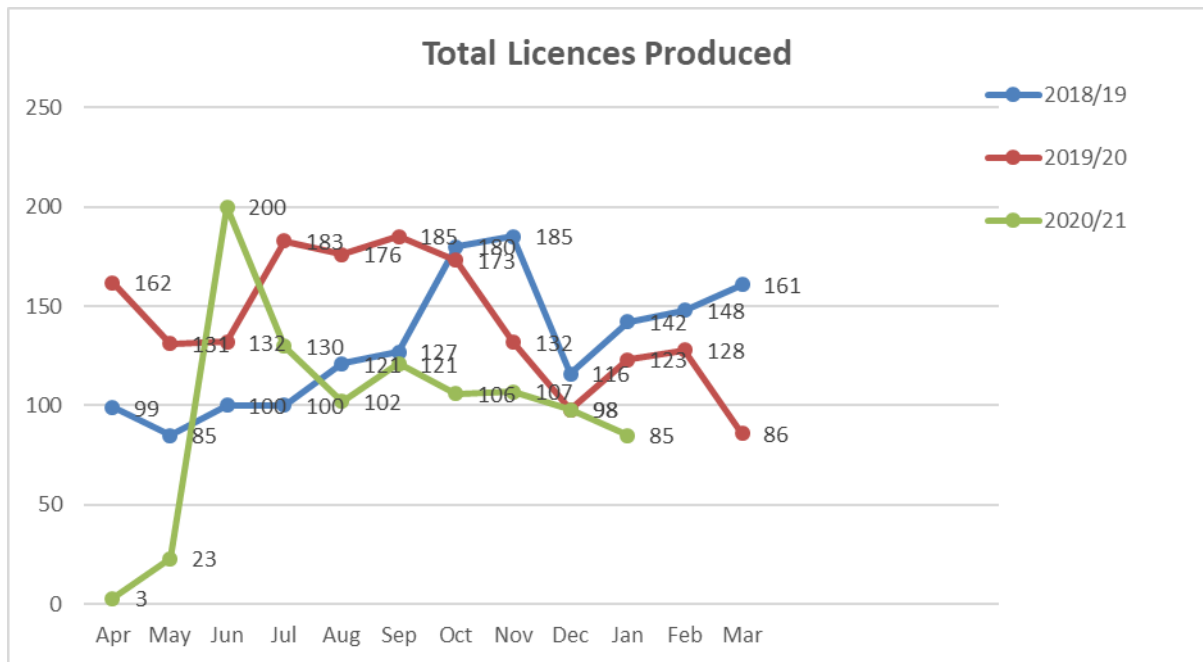
1.3 The chart below shows the level of licence renewals. Driver licences are typically issued for 3 years. Figures are down on 2019, primarily due to the 3-yearly cycle of licensing and 2019 identified a large percentage of drivers renewing their licence.



1.4 The below chart shows the level of new licence applications processed.

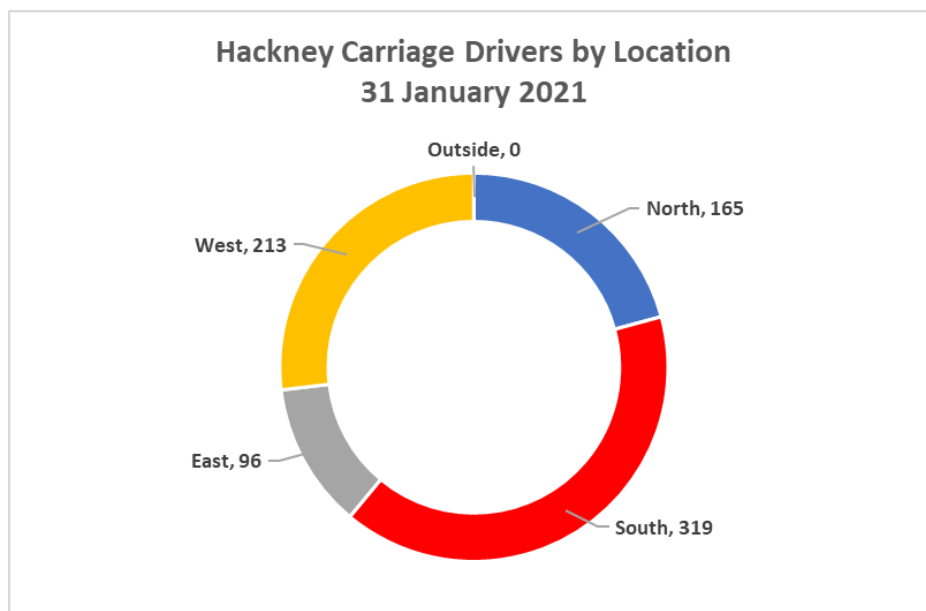


1.5 The chart below shows the total number of licences produced each month. Driver licences are issued for one or three years, with most drivers opting for a three-year licence. 2019 identified a large number of drivers renew and is behind the increased numbers for 2020.



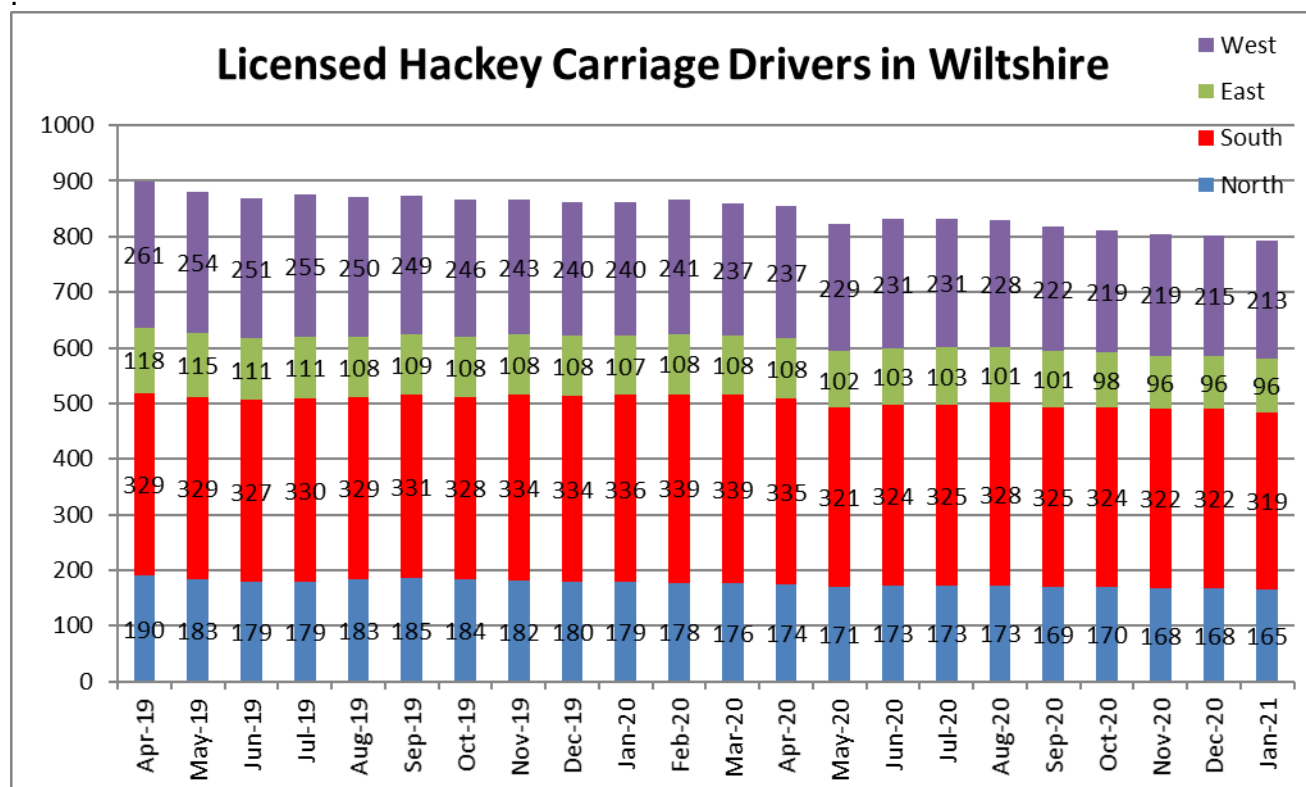
1.6 The total number of licensed hackney carriage drivers in Wiltshire and their location is shown below.

The total number of licensed hackney carriage drivers at the end of January 2021 was 793, a decrease of 18 over the previous two months. 165 were licensed in the North area, 96 in the East, 319 in the South and 213 in the West. Over the year April 2019 to April 2020 the number of hackney carriage drivers fell by 44. The number of private hire drivers rose by 12 over the same period, giving an overall fall in driver numbers of 32. Covid-19 and lockdown have seen a reduction in hackney carriage drivers of 67 since the end of February 2020, this represents an 8% fall in hackney carriage drivers. Other Local Authorities are reporting falls in driver numbers of between 10% and 20% so Wiltshire has not been impacted as heavily as other areas.



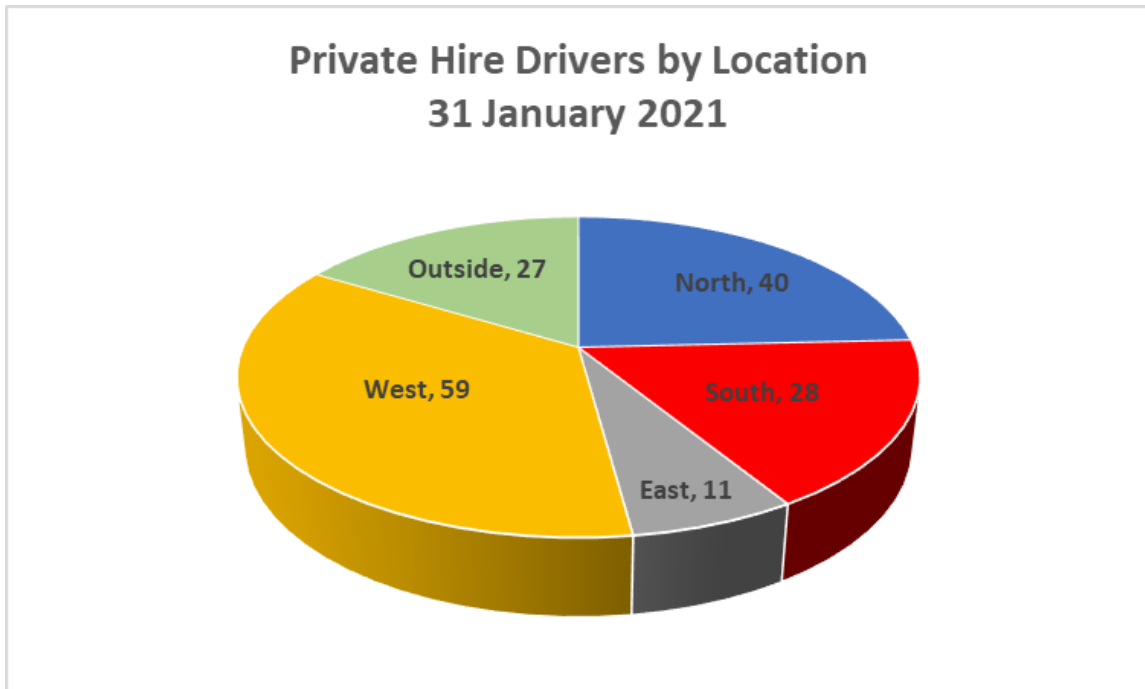
1.7 The graph below shows the monthly variation in hackney carriage driver numbers during 2019/20 and 2021/22. During January 2021 numbers decreased by 8, numbers in the North fell by 3, the West fell by 2, the South fell by 3 and numbers in the East remained unchanged when compared to the previous month.

Since April 2019 Hackney Carriage driver numbers have fallen in all areas, down 48 in the West, 25 in the North, 22 in the East and 10 in the South.

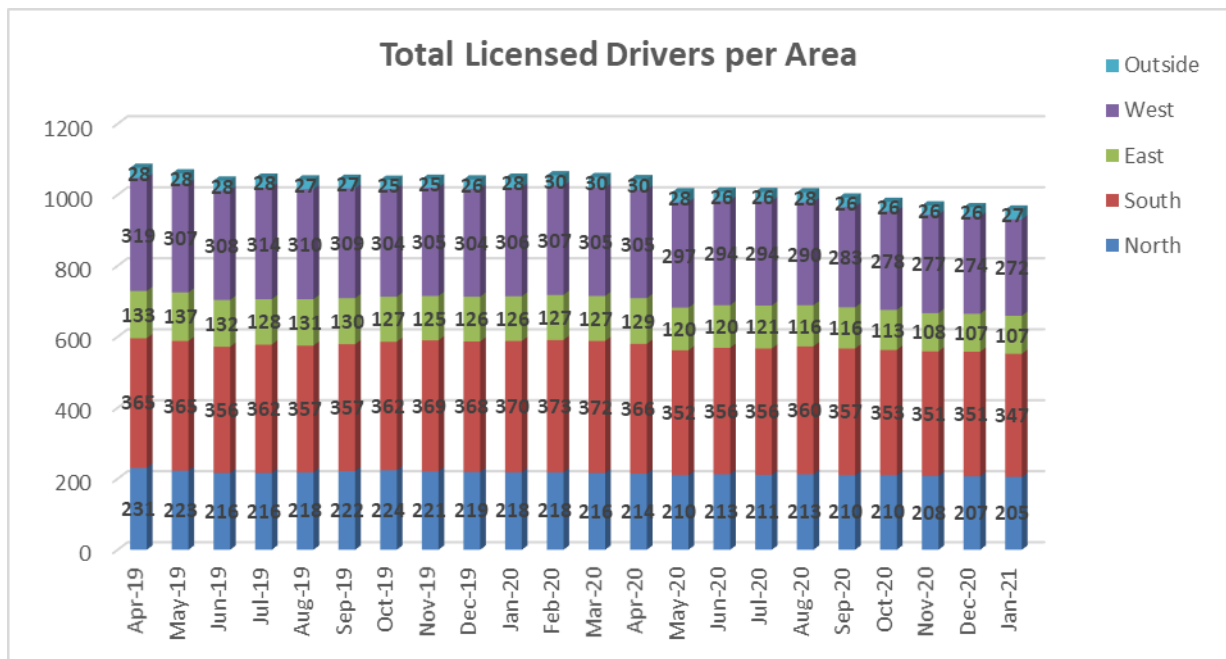


1.8 The team also license private hire only drivers, these totalled 165 as at the end of January 2021, an increase of 1 over the month. This brought the total number of drivers licensed to 958, a reduction of 7 over the month.

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. For information, the area in which the private hire drivers are registered is as detailed in the pie chart at below.



1.9 The total number of licensed drivers in each area since April 2019 is shown below:



1.10 Since April 2019 the number of hackney carriage drivers has fallen by 98 and the number of private hire drivers has fallen by 9, an overall fall of 107 drivers in 18 months. However, if we look at the data for the period between the end of February 2020 and January 2021 the fall in drivers is 97. It is clear that the pandemic this year has had a significant impact on the industry. The fall of 97 drivers since the end of February 2020 represents a fall of 9%.

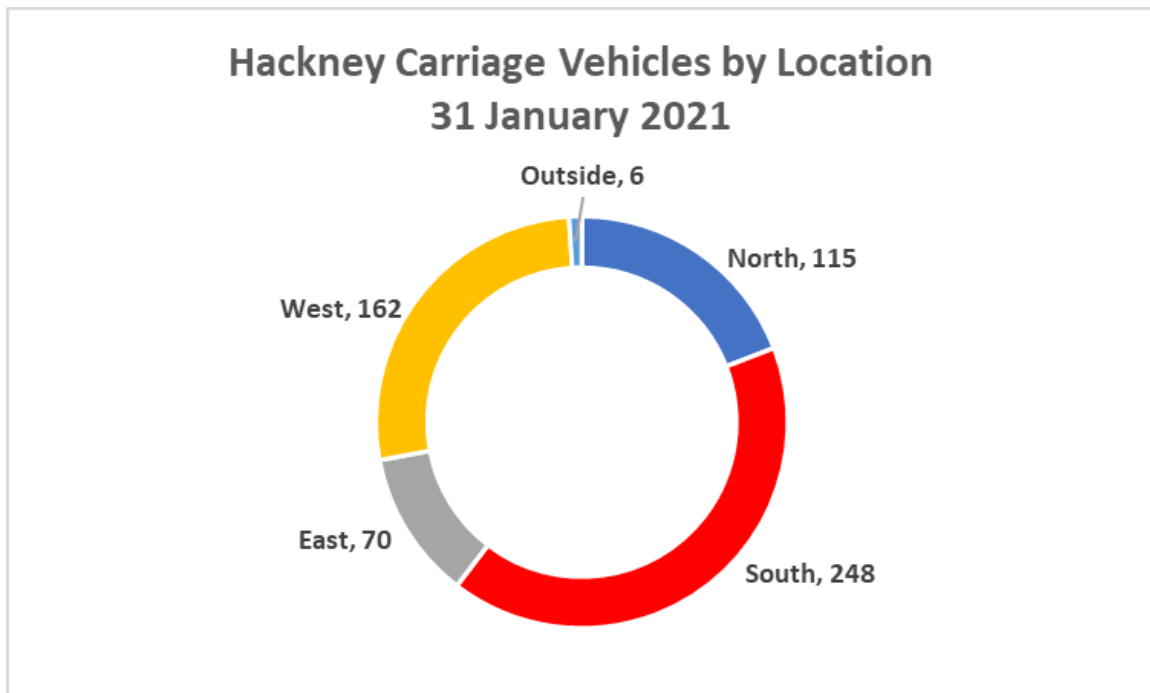
2.0 Licensed Vehicles

2.1 At the end of January 2021 the taxi licensing team licensed a total of 825 vehicles, down 15 on the previous month. A number of drivers issued with temporary permits have chosen not to renew in light of the impact of Covid-19 on the industry. The impact of lockdown and the Covid restrictions is starting to take effect and the vehicle numbers are starting to drop. Between February 2020 and January 2021 vehicle numbers fell 105 or 11%. The vehicle split is as follows:

601 hackney carriage vehicles and 224 private hire vehicles, a decrease of 11 hackney carriage vehicles and 4 private hire vehicles on the previous month.

Of the 825 vehicles licensed, 13.5% or 111 vehicles are wheelchair accessible (WAV), the number of WAV vehicles remains consistent. 30% of private hire vehicles are wheelchair accessible but only 7% of hackney carriages can carry a wheelchair.

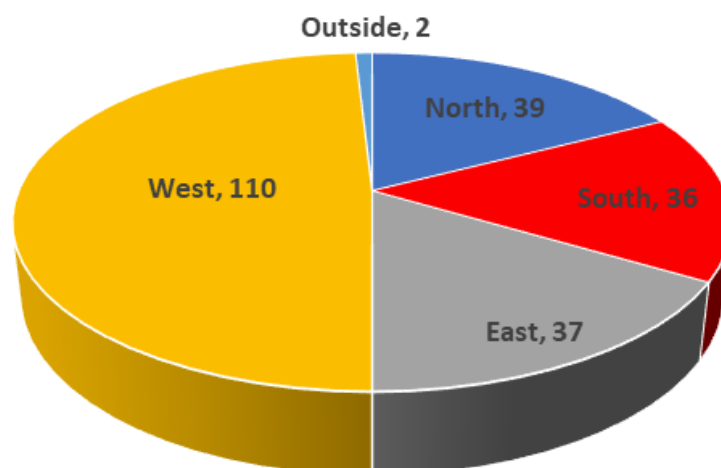
The location split of all hackney carriage vehicles is shown below.



The team also license private hire only vehicles. As advised above these totalled 224 as at the end of January 2021.

2.2 Private Hire drivers are not restricted by zone and can take bookings from anywhere in the Country if they wish. For information the area in which the private hire vehicles are registered is shown below:

Private Hire Vehicles by Location 31 January 2021



Between April 2019 and January 2021, the number of licensed vehicles, hackney carriages and private hire vehicles decreased by 103. This number has reduced by 102 since the first Covid-19 lockdown when announced in March 2020.

3.0 Enforcement actions

3.1 The team underwent a structure change in October 2019 to allow for more visible enforcement. The team commenced a proactive enforcement plan on 15 October 2019 ensuring we have a visible presence on the rank. This has seen increased enforcement and a greater number of penalty points and formal notices issued. The team issued penalty points on 23 occasions during January 2021, our highest monthly total, as well as undertaking drive-by inspections within our towns to identify potential issues.

3.2 Penalty points were issued 23 times during January 2021, to 17 different drivers and 6 vehicles, the reasons are detailed below;

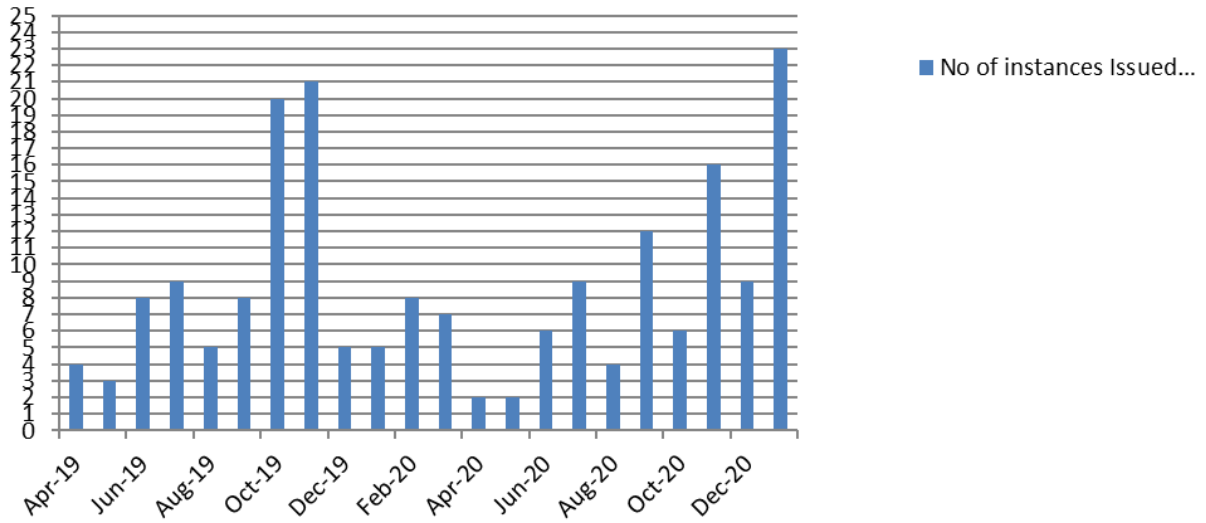
Reason for Penalty Points	Number of Instances
Using a Vehicle with no MOT	11
Unsatisfactory Behaviour	5
Failure to display drivers' badge	2
Failure to be with vehicle on a rank	2
Failure to notify of a driving conviction	1
Failure to clean licence plates	1
Failure to display licence plate correctly	1

3.3 The Council operates an internal penalty points scheme under which a driver or vehicle licence will be reviewed and potentially suspended if they reach 12 points in a rolling 12-month period.

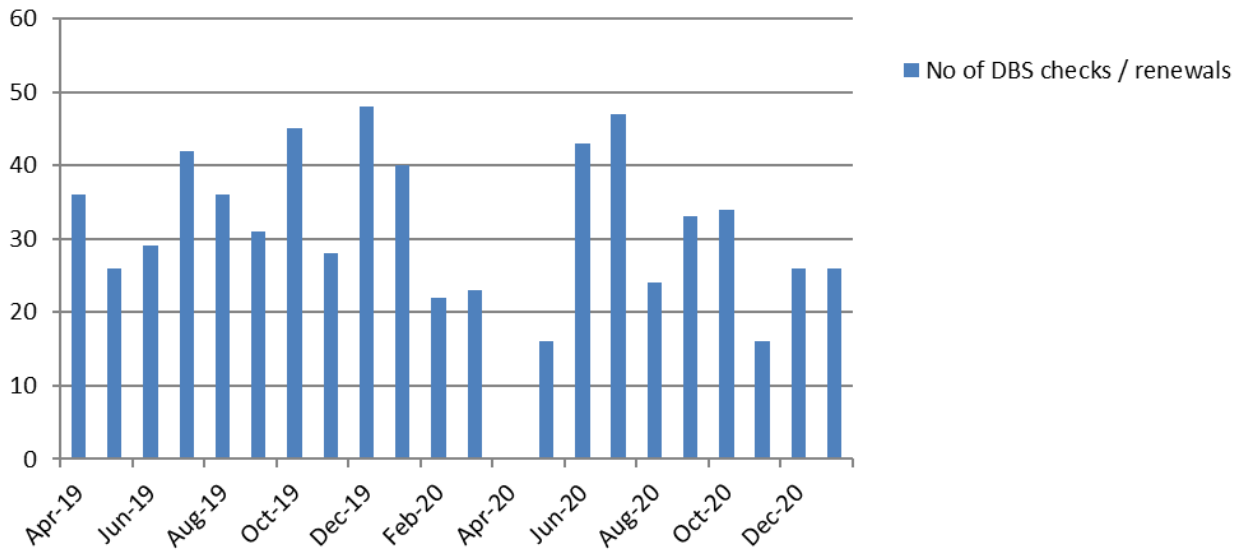
3.4 The Team revoked one driver's licence but did not suspend any licences during January 2021 and also completed 26 DBS checks during January 2021.

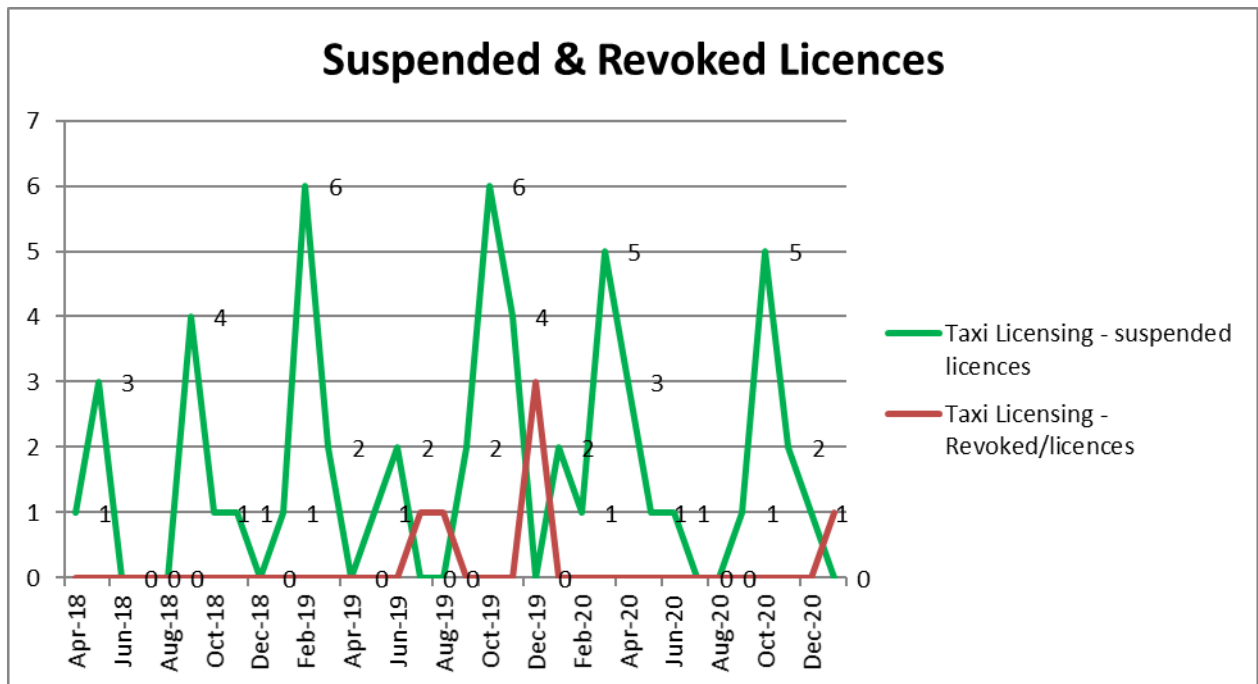
The graphs below show the trend of increased enforcement as the team effectively manage our driver database.

No of instances Issued Penalty Points



No of DBS checks / renewals





3.5 The team have commenced weekly data downloads to DEFRA in relation to our vehicle fleet after the implementation of the Environment Bill 2020 which placed requirements on local authorities to manage air quality. This will impact taxis and our guidelines around vehicle age and emissions. The Council is also looking at how it delivers its commitment to carbon targets and is developing a strategy for moving our existing taxi fleet to electric or alternative fuels. Work is at an early stage and a further update will be provided to the Licensing Committee in due course.

3.6 As advised, the current pandemic has hit the taxi industry very hard with business volumes dropping 80% overnight and threatening the very existence of operators and drivers. The Taxi Licensing team have provided drivers and operators with the latest Government advice at every stage of the pandemic.

3.7 The Department of Transport (DfT) have produced Covid-19 guidance aimed at the taxi and PHV trade. This guidance, has been continually updated and has been shared with drivers and operators and can be read here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

They have also created a resource page dedicated to Taxis and PHV on their Extranet: For further information click on the following link: <https://extranet.dft.gov.uk/safer-transport-campaign/resources-for-taxi-phv/>

3.8 The Team continue to work on a number of initiatives as a result of the DfT issued statutory taxi & private hire vehicles standards in July 2020. These were in response to evidence to support the view that taxis and private hire vehicles are a high-risk environment in terms of risks to passengers. The initiatives include:

- Licensing Committee involvement in decisions to suspend or revoke a licence to increase transparency. Formation of a regulatory committee or panel.
- Joint authorisation of Local Authorities e.g. Agreement with Mendip that they can enforce against any drivers operating in their area and vice versa.
- Documentation of the Council's complaints procedure which will be included in one overall policy
- Update of both driver and vehicle guidelines

- Identifying training that can be provided to drivers on subjects such as County Lines
- Enhancing operator licence requirements, DBS checks on all office staff who handle taxi bookings, completed risk assessments on staff, processes and policies on employing individuals under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

3.9 The team will provide further updates on these workstreams in 2021.

Tom Ince
Principal Compliance Officer
February 2021