

**Wiltshire Council**

**Licensing Committee**

**17 March 2014**

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## **Update on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing**

### **Summary**

This report updates members on progress following the reorganisation of the Hackney vehicle licensing.

### **Proposal**

To update members on the progress of service delivery for managing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing and risk related management across Wiltshire Council's administrative area.

### **Reason for Proposal**

To update members of the changes in the delivery of the Council's licensing functions, since the internal reorganisation of the function following the VR programme during 2013.

**Tracy Carter**  
**Associate Director, Waste and Environment**

**Wiltshire Council**

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**Transfer of Hackney Licensing to Environment Services**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. This report updates members on progress following the reorganisation of the Hackney vehicle licensing.

**Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. The process of controlling and licensing Hackney Carriage Vehicle and Private Hire operators assists the Council in achieving a number of the six outcomes in the business plan 2013-2017.
  - Everyone in Wiltshire lives in a high quality environment
  - People in Wiltshire have healthy, active and high-quality lives
  - People are as protected from harm as possible and feel safe

**Background**

3. Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Wiltshire Council, as the local authority, has a legal responsibility to regulate all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing.
4. In November 2013, due to the Council's voluntary redundancy programme, Public Protection decided to concentrate its resources on carrying out the Council's responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003. The Environment service agreed to deliver several licensing functions that sat naturally within its remit, Street Trading, Street Collections, Scrap Metal Dealers and Hackney Carriage.

**What we have done to date:**

- a. We have introduced an appointment process and redesigned the calendar booking system to improve customer experience, by making it simpler for staff to process phone enquiries.
- b. The delivery of this service to the customer in the field has been divided into two areas; North & South of the County.
- c. We have introduced a Text message service which has been set up by area to inform drivers and operators on changes in inspection dates/legislation changes and short notice suspension of taxi ranks.

- d. We have introduced a new credit card type driver badge system to improve processing time and overhead costs.
- e. Introduced officers to customers by 'Walking the Ranks' – (Ongoing regular events planned)
- f. Published new quarterly newsletter to all operators and drivers
- g. During this period all operators and drivers requests have been processed

**What needs to be done:**

- a. Start formal consultation on one tariff, following approval in principle given by this Committee in September 2013
- b. Agree date for the introduction of one tariff
- c. Customers to identify area trade representatives to collaborate on message content for quarterly newsletters and regular trade meetings
- d. Arrange programme of trade update meetings
- e. Streamline licence issuing process to enable complete issue of licence, driver badge or vehicle plate at booked appointment instead of driver/operator having to post important legal documents
- f. Set up programme for multi-agency evening enforcement checks
- g. Develop policy on fire extinguisher requirement

**Safeguarding Implications**

- 5. Failure to effectively licence Hackney vehicles, drivers and operators leaves children and vulnerable people unprotected from unlicensed Hackney vehicles and drivers across the county. Potentially leaving the public at risk of unsafe vehicle journeys and possible overcharging.

**Public Health Implications**

- 6. Risk of children and vulnerable people being unprotected from unlicensed Hackney vehicles and drivers across the county. Potentially leaving the public at risk of unsafe vehicle journeys.

**Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

- 7. There is minimal environmental impact of these proposals.
- 8. There are no direct environmental impacts, apart from reducing emissions from a number of older less efficient (heavily smoking) vehicles identified at inspections

**Equality Impact of the Proposal**

- 9. The impact of these proposals is assessed as 'low' against the Council statutory responsibilities

**Risk Assessment**

- 10. Time constraints & pressure to complete the formal consultation on one tariff.
- 11. Potential risk of legal challenge or complaint from operators or drivers who feel unable to obtain licences to trade legally.

## **Financial Implications**

12. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
13. The financial implications of introducing one tariff will be considered in future reports; it is envisaged this will focus on the income/costs of issuing hackney carriage/private hire licences and how this would be affected by introducing a single tariff. Potential additional costs would be incurred if the tariff needs to be re-advertised; however the council is not legally bound to re-advertise any changes and this will be examined in future reports.

## **Legal Implications**

14. Failure to effectively implement the Council's hackney carriage licensing responsibilities places the Council at risk of legal challenge and reputational risk.

## **Recommendation**

15. That the committee notes the update on the reorganisation for managing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing and risk related management across Wiltshire Council's administrative area.

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**Associate Director, Waste and Environment**

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## **Background Papers**

1. National Inspection Standards - Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles
2. Wiltshire Council Guidelines for Hackney Carriage/Private Hire drivers, Hackney Carriage vehicles, Private Hire vehicles and Private Hire operators 2013