

BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL LICENSING REGULATORY BOARD

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The purpose of this report, is to provide Members with an overview of the work Licensing Enforcement Officers have undertaken to date. Members may be aware that from April 2013, the Licensing Service became fully staffed with Enforcement Officers and as such, have been keen to embark on a number of taxi licensing enforcement operations.

On 13 June 2013, Licensing Enforcement Officers alongside Vehicle Examiners from the Smithies Lane Depot, undertook a series of licensed operator inspections. During the inspections, in total, 18 licensed vehicles (both hackney carriage and private hire) were inspected, the results of which are as follows:

- 7 vehicles found to be compliant
- 5 vehicles issued with a suspension notice for dangerous defects i.e. defective tyres below the legal limit
- 6 vehicles issued with a written warning for a variety of reasons i.e. failing to complete daily check sheet or poor cleanliness to vehicle interior

Taking the above into account, Members will note that 28% of vehicles inspected were found not to be non-compliant and as a result, suspended with immediate effect. In addition to this, 33% of vehicles inspected were issued with a written warning for reasons that could have been simply avoided through the completion of a daily inspection check sheet or maintaining their vehicle in a clean and tidy manner.

On 26 July 2013, a second operation took place between Licensing Enforcement Officers and again colleagues from Smithies Lane Depot, targeting licensed operators whose vehicles persistently fail their MOT test. In total, 45 licensed vehicles (both hackney carriage and private hire) were inspected, the results of which are as follows:

- 29 vehicles found to be compliant
- 14 vehicles issued with a suspension notice for dangerous defects i.e. defective tyres below the legal limit, no side light, no brake lights, partial vehicle signage, sharp edges to vehicle exterior
- 2 vehicles issued with a written warning for displaying licence plate in rear window of vehicle or failure to complete vehicle check sheet

Taking the above into account, Members will note that 31% of vehicles inspected were found to be non-compliant and as a result, suspended with immediate effect and 4% issued with a written warning.

On 16 August 2013, a further joint working enforcement operation took place, this time involving officers from the Licensing Service, South Yorkshire Police and VOSA. On this occasion, the operation did not target specific operators and their vehicles, instead an evening roadside spot-check was undertaken.

In total, only 14 licensed vehicles (both hackney carriage and private) were stopped and inspected. Enforcement Officers found that once a licensed vehicle had been stopped, the details of the operation were soon circulated amongst the trade who in turn avoided the area leaving fewer vehicles to inspect. On this occasion, Officers were pleased to report that every vehicle stopped and inspected was found to be compliant. This is an excellent result, as Officers within the Licensing Service are more concerned with compliancy and are determined to see existing vehicle suspension and MOT failure rates improve, in a bid to drive up standards.

Vehicle non-compliance is not just an issue Officers are concerned with during the undertaking of each and every enforcement operation, it is one at the forefront of every Vehicle Examiners mind whilst undertaking an MOT test. Officers within the Licensing Service were alarmed to learn that only recently vehicle failure rates had peaked at 80%. This shocking and appalling statistic is one, both Enforcement Officers and fellow colleagues from Smithies Lane Depot will not chose to ignore. Defective tyres is not acceptable, failure to complete a basic vehicle check sheet, a check sheet that ensures the very safety of a vehicle, is not acceptable.

Proactive enforcement operations like these will continue to take place on a quarterly basis. However, operators, vehicle proprietors and drivers alike must start accepting responsibility for their failures and make a change and failure to do so, will only continue to put the safety of the public at risk when using a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle in Barnsley.

After all, the principal consideration here must be one of public safety.

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