

MEETING:	General Licensing Regulatory Board
DATE:	Wednesday 12 February 2025
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Green (Chair), Bellamy, Bowser, Cherryholme, Clarke, Denton, Holling, Hunt, Lodge, Markham, Moyes, Murray, Pearson, Roberts, Shepherd, Tattersall, Waters and P. Wright

14 Declarations of Interests on matters contained within the Agenda

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest from Members in respect of items on the agenda.

15 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18 December 2024 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

16 Enforcement Update

Members were provided with an overview of the enforcement work that had recently been undertaken by Licensing Officers.

It was noted that the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Associations had raised concerns at the regular Trade Liaison Meetings regarding the volume of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicles, which were licensed by other local authorities and operated within Barnsley town centre.

On 14 December 2024, a joint pro-active static nighttime operation had been undertaken with the Licensing Enforcement Officers and Licensing Officers from Sheffield, Kirklees and Wolverhampton, which had focused on Barnsley town centre and the drivers and vehicles that work in the nighttime economy. Councillor Green, Chair of the Licensing Committee had also been in attendance. A total of 45 licensed vehicles and drivers had been inspected on the night, 10 had been licensed by Barnsley Council, 13 from Leeds Council, 10 from Sheffield Council, 5 from Chesterfield Council, 4 from Wolverhampton Council and 3 from Rotherham Council.

Members noted the results of the 10 Barnsley vehicles and drivers that had been stopped and checked as follows:

- 6 licensed vehicles and drivers had been fully compliant.
- 2 vehicles had been suspended for defective lights.
- 2 vehicles had been suspended for non-compliant signage and license plates.
- 4 vehicles had received advice regarding first aid kits, bodywork and minor light issues.

- The compliance details of the vehicles and drivers that were licensed by other local authorities had been fed back to their respective Licensing Officers.

It was noted that proactive and reactive enforcement operations would continue to take place on a regular basis. The failure of drivers to adhere to the clear standards set out by all licensing authorities may put the safety of the public at risk when travelling by Hackney Carriages or Private Hire vehicles.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to a series of questions raised by Members, particular reference was made to the following:

- Vehicle standards were not consistent across all local authorities.
- Barnsley Licencing Enforcement Officers continued to offer to attend joint pro-active operations in other local authority areas. D Bailey continued to meet with other local authorities on a regular basis.
- There was a tendency for Barnsley licenced drivers and vehicles not to travel outside of Barnsley unless their fare took them outside of the borough.
- Councillor Green had met with MPs to ascertain what could be done at a South Yorkshire local authority level to standardise licensing practices. The matter had been escalated and representations were also being made by other local authorities.
- None of the 10 Barnsley vehicles and drivers that had been stopped during the nighttime operation on 14 December 2024 had been repeat offenders.
- All drivers had a responsibility to ensure their vehicles were always clean. A suspension would be issued where a vehicle was found to be unclean, until it was cleaned and returned for inspection. Members were requested to provide D Bailey with the number plate details of any unclean vehicles.

In response to a query raised by Councillor Shepherd regarding repeat offenders, D Bailey referred to the licensing policy which stated that a driver would be brought before the General Licensing Regulatory Board Panel following 3 written warnings. Where a vehicle was found to be defective, it was the vehicle that was suspended rather than the driver. Members agreed to D Bailey's suggestion for a report to be presented to a future Board Meeting, to recommend a change to the policy to include repeat offenders of defective vehicles to be brought before the General Licensing Regulatory Board Panel.

RESOLVED that Members agreed to support Officers and encourage Private Hire and Hackney Carriage drivers and operators to comply with the conditions of their licence and continue to keep their vehicles as safe as possible for both drivers and customers at all times.

Chair