

MEETING:	General Licensing Regulatory Board
DATE:	Wednesday, 16 February 2022
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Green (Chair), Bowser, Bruff, Cherryholme, Clarke, Danforth, K. Dyson, Eastwood, Franklin, J. Higginbottom, Hunt, Newing, Osborne, Ramchandani, Spence, Stowe, Sumner, Tattersall, Wilson and Wray

18 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Tattersall declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Minute No. 20 on the agenda due to her involvement with the COVID Relief Fund.

19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd December 2021 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

20 Enforcement Update

Debbie Bailey provided Members with an overview of the enforcement work Licensing Officers have recently undertake and the advice and support given to the hackney carriage and private hire trade during the COVID pandemic

Key points to note included:

Licensing Officers have continued to work proactively with the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade and other Local Authorities to ensure that those who chose to work through the Covid pandemic did so whilst ensuring to the best of everyone's ability that both customers and drivers remained safe.

A taxi and private hire licensing enforcement operation took place at Springwell School on 18th November 2021. A total of 8 vehicles were inspected, 5 were compliant, 1 driver was issued a written warning for failing to complete his daily vehicle check, 1 vehicle licenses by another Local Authority was found to have an inoperative off side brake light. This was reported to the relevant Local Authority to action. Another vehicle licensed by another licensed by another Local Authority was found to have a near side front tyre below the legal limit, which was reported to the relevant Local Authority.

The following matters were highlighted:

Three staggered payments of £500 were given to all licensed drivers, whether private hire or hackney carriage, across South Yorkshire, from the Sheffield City Region Fund to help them through the pandemic. Cllr Tattersall confirmed that payments were from the SCR Fund and the COVID Relief Fund.

The failure rate at Springwell School was as expected. It should be noted that 5 out of 6 Barnsley vehicles were compliant and the one which was not compliant related to paperwork, not a defect as such.

Licensing would like to carry out inspections on a monthly basis going forward, but this depends on the workload of the inspection officers at Smithies as this is not the work of licensing officers.

Where vehicles are found to be defective this is not reported to the Police as a matter of course. The vehicle licence is suspended until the fault is rectified and then the vehicle is reinspected. However, on joint enforcement visits with the Police, the Police have the powers to issue fixed penalty notices and to prevent the vehicle moving at all.

Department of Transport Guidance issued in 2020 (and further updates) make reference to masks and cleaning the vehicle between passengers etc. This guidance is shared with all partners, but realistically it is impossible to check that this is complied with. However, if non compliance is reported this will be thoroughly investigated.

Members congratulated the service on carrying out the vehicle checks, particularly as the children attending Springwell are particularly vulnerable.

A written warning expires after 12 months but does form part of a driver's record permanently. If a driver receives 3 written warnings they will have to come before a Licensing Panel.

Members expressed concern at the level of defects identified with drivers from other authorities, who may not have the same level of checks etc., that we do in Barnsley. It was reiterated that Barnsley has a very good working relationship with drivers in Barnsley and as a result of this, Barnsley has not experienced the same level of problems as seen in other Authorities.

A shortage of drivers for evening work remains as although it appears Barnsley has the same number of drivers as pre-Covid, drivers have had to find other jobs although they have retained their licences. Everything is being done to encourage drivers to work evenings and work is ongoing with the trade to identify and resolve any problems. A meeting is taking place with the trade tomorrow (17th February) to discuss this.

RESOLVED that Debbie be thanked for her attendance and contribution and the update be noted.

Chair