

## **Progress of Scrutiny Review Recommendations**

### **Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Title of the review: **Hackney Carriage Licensing Scrutiny Review**

Initial response to Overview received: **7 September 2013**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor M Payne**

Chair of the review group: **Councillor M Paling**

Officer supporting the review: **Jane Ansell**

#### **Guidance**

Monitoring of the progress of recommendations to scrutiny reviews is requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approximately six months after the initial response.

Updates are requested regarding those recommendations that were **accepted** or **partially accepted**. The update section should be completed identifying progress or new developments that have taken place.

If you need any further assistance in completing this response please contact the Officer that supported the review

#### **Recommendation 1**

That the planned benchmarking exercise and further standardisation of Gedling Borough Council's Licensing Policy against those of neighbouring authorities is progressed in consultation with the Licensing Committee as stated in the officer responses at **appendix 1**.

#### **Recommendation Accepted**

#### **Initial Response to Overview**

The service is committed to standardisation of processes, fees and policies. Work to achieve this in Nottinghamshire is led through the Notts' Authorities Licensing Group (NALG), Gedling is an active member of this group, policies have previously been developed together and further work will be carried out and reported on.

### **Update on progress of the recommendation**

Priority has been the introduction of the Knowledge test. The planned review of the policy cannot commence before this process has been completed as the introduction has fundamentally changed how we process applications. Officer's will commence the review in consultation with colleagues in other authorities after the planned 6 month review of the introduction of the test.

### **Recommendation 2 (of 7)**

That subject to rigorous Equalities Impact Assessment the Council and Environment and Licensing Team progress the implementation of a topography test as part of the taxi licensing process with immediate effect.

#### **Recommendation Accepted**

#### **Initial Response to Overview**

I fully accept that the introduction of a topography test for licensees will make a positive contribution to the quality of the service and help ensure public safety; this approach is consistent with surrounding authorities. I intend to pursue the introduction of the test through the budget discussions this year, for introduction in 2014/15.

### **Update on progress of the recommendation**

The knowledge (topography) test was introduced successfully in June this year. A 6 month review is planned for November

### **Recommendation 3**

That the Council and Licensing Team seek to encourage and promote amongst fleet operators the introduction of an NVQ for taxi drivers, to incorporate customer care and communication skills, health and safety and awareness when assisting people with disabilities.

#### **Recommendation Accepted**

#### **Initial Response to Overview**

The service will publicise and encourage the adoption of the NVQ. This will be done in the service's new newsletter, on the website, correspondence etc. It should be noted that there are a limited number of providers of the course in the market place and this will be kept under review.

### **Update on progress of the recommendation**

At the time of writing the first edition of Private Hire and Taxi Talk is being printed. It is planned that an article in the next edition to encourage uptake of the NVQ will be included.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That the Environment and Licensing Team seeks to include taxi fleets in the DEFRA Transport Plan as part of the 'Eco Stars' initiative, giving consideration to the use of the 'fleet age' procedures as an opportunity to influence fleet operators to participate in the scheme.

##### **Recommendation Accepted**

##### **Initial Response to Overview**

The ECOSTARS scheme pioneered with DEFRA funding has now rolled out to cover the conurbation. Brendan Cox from the Public Protection Service will look to drive this forward with agreement from the other authorities to ensure consistency.

##### **Update on progress of the recommendation**

The ECOSTARS scheme is without funding and may fold, according it is unwise to pursue this at the moment. Efforts are being made to secure further funding for the conurbation, if this is successful then this recommendation will be actioned.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That a cost comparison exercise on the licensing fees is carried out with those of other authorities, to establish whether this is a contributing factor to the increased demand experienced at Gedling Borough Council.

##### **Recommendation Accepted**

##### **Initial Response to Overview**

Please see my answer to recommendation 1. The service is currently involved in a fee setting exercise for 2014/15 where the cost basis for the fees is being compared.

##### **Update on progress of the recommendation**

This was carried out. GBC costs are lower than of neighbouring authorities. Licence fees have been increased and are planned to be increased further for 2015/16. There are other cost factors such as driver's insurance that are more of an incentive as well as the lack of a knowledge test requirement (now resolved)

## **Recommendation 6**

That the September 2013 Environment and Licencing Committee takes the opportunity to reflect upon and review the level of positive impact of the new application process and improved forms and guidance.

### **Recommendation Partly Accepted**

#### **Initial Response to Overview**

The forms, processes, fees and procedures are constantly under review. There is considerable work being undertaken currently to prepare for 2014/15, particularly for the possible introduction of the topography test and the transfer of roles from service support to customer services. Given all this change and potential change it may be more appropriate that this is done in the early part of the next financial year.

#### **Update on progress of the recommendation**

The forms and application process has changed and been met positively. These changes are closely linked to the introduction of the knowledge test, and will be included in November's review.