

Name of meeting and date: Licensing & Safety Committee – 18th March 2011

Title of report: Penalty Point System for Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles

No
Not applicable
Yes
subject of a report to the Licensing Penel wealty counts scheme will not in any way
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Electoral wards affected and ward councillors consulted: All wards

Public or private: Public

1. Purpose of report

To assist the Council in improving standards by considering the proposed introduction of a penalty points scheme for Hackney Carriage, Private Hire drivers and Operators.

2. Relevant Background Details

Currently Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Operators, Drivers and Vehicles are principally governed by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Town Police Clauses Act 1847, Council Byelaws and the Conditions implemented by this Licensing Authority.

When Drivers, Owners or Operators of vehicles commit an offence or breach these rules, persons involved are asked to attend the offices for an interview and then once investigations are completed, letters are sent out detailing the outcome with a record kept on the drivers file. The outcome of investigations may result in no further action being taken, a formal warning, referral to the Licensing Panel and/or prosecution which could subsequently result in the revocation of a licence.

3. Key Points

Whilst the majority of licence holders abide by the rules, there is small number of drivers that consistently do not. Officer's time is regularly unnecessarily spent chasing up drivers who do not produce required information on time and who contravene Council conditions e.g. not wearing badges. The primary objective of implementing a penalty point's scheme is to improve the levels of compliance within the trade which would subsequently help improve the standards, safety and protection for the travelling public.

The scheme is designed to work in conjunction with current procedures and assist in providing a formalised stepped enforcement plan which is easier for drivers and proprietors to understand. The basic purpose of the scheme is to record misdemeanours and to act as a record of driver's and/or operator's behaviour and conduct so as to ascertain whether they are a fit and proper person.

Penalty Points would be issued according to the agreed and published tariff, with any failure to put right any defects or infringements within the given timescales would attract further additional penalty points.

Generally infringements requiring immediate formal action and which would be the subject of a report to the Licensing Panel are rare. However, the introduction of a penalty points scheme will not in any way interfere with this process allowing the most serious cases to continue to be dealt with as they are now.

Points given will remain on record for twelve month rolling period which is considered a reasonable period of time over which the total penalty points awarded to any individual licensee should be assessed. This will allow any older points to be considered as spent and therefore excluded from the running total recorded against any individual licensee.

The period is considered to be of sufficient length so as to allow any licensee who may find themselves accumulating penalty points to take appropriate remedial action before facing the possibility of sanctions being taken.

Where it is decided that the use of the penalty points system is appropriate, the points will be imposed on the scale shown. Points will be issued under existing principles of evidence and infringements will have to be witnessed by Council Officers.

Where a licensee accumulates more than 6 penalty points in any 12 month period the matter would be referred to the Council's Licensing Panel for a decision as to whether the driver is a fit and proper person to continue to hold a license. The Licensing Panel may then suspend or revoke their licence, or issue a warning to the Licensee, depending upon the circumstances. Periods of suspension of a licence by a Panel will be dependant on the nature of the breaches of the legislation/conditions and the compliance history of the individual.

Any disputes regarding the issuing of penalty points will be referred to the Licensing Panel.

4. Consultation

The above proposal for this scheme was put before the Licensing & Safety committee on 1st March 2010, where it was decided a working group should be formed to look at the feasibility of introducing such a scheme.

The working group members chosen were:

Cllr Rochelle Parchment, Cllr Adrian Murphy, Cllr Derek Yates, Taxi Trade Representatives: Amjad Nadeem, Akmal Hussain, Akooji Badat, Council Licensing Officers Michael Stocchero and Karen Eastwood.

5. Issues to be taken into account:-

The implementation of this scheme will alter the way in which enforcement is carried out. However, the scheme does not seek to introduce new regulations in order to complicate the legal process.

Human Rights

The First Protocol 1 Article 1 is relevant in that this progressive enforcement regime could ultimately result in a Driver or Operator license being revoked. Notwithstanding this, there is derogation if the control is in the public interest. Consequently, the implementation of this scheme is a method by which vehicles are kept safe for use. However, a fair balance has to be achieved. The issues are the effect on the Driver or Operators business, the nature of the public interest, whether the public interest could be secured in another way, and if not whether there is a fair balance.

Equality Impact Assessment

The challenge is to ensure that the scheme is consistently applied in all cases without exception, and that it will promote consistency of approach regardless of race, religion, gender etc.

6. Representations

The working group met on 19th April 2010.

Taxi Trade Representatives:

Members of the working group from the taxi trade were not in favour and declined to offer any suggestions other than a blanket refusal to accept a points system in any form, and produced a petition against the proposals. (attached as appendix 1)

Members of the group state that drivers feel the existing system is working well, none of them would welcome a penalty point system. They feel this is just focusing on the 'negatives' and treating all drivers as 'bad drivers'. They pointed out that many of the offences that would incur penalty points were in fact legal requirements enforceable by law.

These views are mirrored in the petition, with drivers believing the proposals to be direct discrimination and many of them calling for strike action.

An updated proposal was sent out to members of the working party requesting any comments. (attached as appendix 2)

West Yorkshire Police Road's Policing:

Representations have been made by West Yorkshire Police Roads Policing advising the inclusion of further offences. These have now been included in the list.

Other Representations:

A number of councillors and drivers have called instead for a 'Reward Scheme' to give credit to drivers and operators rather than penalties, i.e using the carrot approach rather than the stick. However at this time the Licensing Department do not have the capacity for developing and implementing such a scheme.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee give consideration as to whether to progress the implementation of a penalty point scheme, although at present our IT capabilities will not support this penalty point scheme and further work would be required to go live with this scheme.

8. Contact officer and relevant papers

Catherine Walter, Licensing Manager 01484 456860Neal Fearns, Assistant H of S (Building Control)) 01484 221550

List of Appendices
Appendix 1 – Petition from drivers
Appendix 2 – Updated proposal

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PENALTY POINTS SCHEME

The aim of introducing this scheme is to provide stepped enforcement for those licence holders who have contravened licence conditions or associated legal provisions. Introduction of the scheme does not however prejudice the Councils ability to take other action, which it is entitled to take under legislation, bye laws or regulation.

The scheme will be operated as follows:

1. Issuing of Points.

- a) Penalty points will be applied by officers of the Council upon completion of investigation of relevant breaches of the Councils hackney carriage and private hire conditions or other relevant statutory provisions where breaches of those conditions or other relevant statutory provisions are identified.
- b) Penalty points when issued will be confirmed in writing to the relevant licence holder. There will be a 21 day period provided to allow for any appeal to be made against the points issued.
- c) The number of penalty points issued will be in accordance with the attached table.
- d) The Council retains the discretion to issue penalty points to both drivers, driver/owners and operators for a single contravention if the circumstances warrant it.
- e) The imposition of penalty points against a driver who is an employee will not necessarily result in additional imposition of points to his/her employer or operator.
- f) Imposition of penalty points is at the discretion of officers of the Council and is not negotiable. The scheme does however have an appeals procedure.
- g) Penalty points issued under this scheme will have a 'life' of twelve months, and then will be deemed spent. The system is based on a rolling twelve month period.
- h) Six points become spent at the conclusion of any suspension of a driver or driver/owner. Twelve points become spent at the conclusion of any suspension of an operator.
- Penalty points will be issued by the Licensing manager or in his absence the deputy licensing manager. The officer investigating the breach will not issue penalty points.
- j) The Licensing manager will determine any appeals in relation to the imposition of penalty points. Only written appeals will be considered.

2. Actions

- a) On the accumulation of 12 or more penalty points in a rolling twelve month period a driver will be subject to a recommendation to suspend his/her licence.
- b) On accumulation of 12 or more penalty points in a rolling twelve month period a driver/owner will be subject to a recommendation to suspend his/her licence.
- c) On accumulation of 24 or more penalty points in a twelve month period an operator will be subject to a recommendation to suspend his/her licence.
- d) Where a letter is sent to a driver, a copy will be forwarded to the relevant vehicle owner or operator.

3. The suspension process.

- a) All suspensions will be determined by regulatory panel
- b) On accumulating 12 or more penalty points a driver or driver operator will be advised in writing that his/her licence is the subject of a possible suspension.
- c) On accumulation of 24 or more penalty points an operator will be advised in writing that his/her licence is the subject of possible suspension.
- d) The licence holder will be advised of the accrued total of penalty points and the specific infringements identified. The licence holder will be advised of the details of the regulatory panel that will hear the case for suspension.
- e) For drivers or driver/owners the first occasion with the accumulation of 12 or more points within a twelve month period the recommendation will be suspension for 28 consecutive days.
- f) For drivers or driver/owners a second occasion with the award of 12 or more penalty points the recommendation would be for suspension for 56 consecutive days.
- g) A third accumulation of 12 points by a driver or driver/owner would result in a recommendation to revoke his/her licence(s).
- h) An operator accumulating 24 points on the first occasion would result in a recommendation to suspend their operators licence for 28 consecutive days.
- i) A second accumulation of 24 points would result in a recommendation to suspend their operators licence for 56 consecutive days.

Offence/ Breach of condition	Max	Poir	nts Driv	/er	Veh	icle owner/Operator
Failure to notify the Council of change of name or address within 7 calendar days.	3*		#_		#	
Unreasonably prolonging a journey, or overcharging of fares.	4*		#			
Failure to produce documents within a timescale when requested to do so.	4*		#		#	
Vehicle in unsatisfactory condition inside or out.			4 #		#	
Failure to produce vehicle for testing when required.	4*		#		#	
Failure to report within 72 hours an accident or damage to a licensed vehicle.	t		3 #		#	
Overloading of licenced vehicle, including exceeding the licensed number of	6*		#			
passengers.						
Failure to display external licence plate or door sign as required (including not attachir plate in suitable mannener)	4* ng		#		#	
Failure to notify transfer of Private Hire or Hackney Carriage Licence within 14 days.	4*		#		#	
Failure to provide information on vehicle location.			3 #		#	
Failure to have a working fire extinguisher correctly fitted and serviced.			3 #		#	
Failure to display 'taxi' sign on roof of Hackney carriage.			4 #		#	
Failure to maintain, keep or produce records of private hire bookings, or other documents required to be kept.			6		#	
Unsatisfacory behaviour or conduct of drive	er.		3 #		#	
Failure to wear drivers badge.	4*		#		#	
Failure to be in possession of drivers badge	e. 4*		#		#	
Failure to notify change of medical circumstances.			6#		#	
Failure to return drivers badge within 7 day of being requested to do so.	s 4*		#		#	

Failure to return vehicle licence plate within 7 days of being requested to do so.	4*		#	#	
Failure to notify the Council of any motoring or criminal convictions or cautions during period of current licence.		6	6 #	#	
period of current licence.					
Providing false/misleading information on application form, or failing to provide relevant information.	6*		#	#	
Obstructing an officer of the council while undertaking their duties.		3	3 #	#	
Using a mobile phone whilst driving.		3	3 #		
Smoking in licensed vehicle.	3*		#		
Minor defects to vehicle.		3	3 #	#	
Eating food whilst driving licensed vehicle.		3	3 #		
Making dangerous road manouvre.	3*		#		
Behaviour resulting in substantiated complaint from member of the public or elected member.		3	3 #	#	
Driver not holding a cu rrent Hacki ney Carriage/P rivate Hire Drivers Licence	12*		#	#	
Refusal to accept hiring without reasonable cause (eg. Drunk or rude customer) [HC]	4*		#		
Touting/Illegally plying for hire	9*		#	#	
Failure to display/no vehilce excise licence	6*		#	#	
Using unlicensed vehicle or vehicle	12*		#	#	
without insurance					
Using a vehicle subject to a suspension order		12	2 #	#	
Carrying an offensive weapon in a vehicle		(6 #		
Driver not holding current DVLA Licence	12*		#	#	
Failure to observe Rank discipline	3*		#	#	
Failure to display internal licence plate			4 #	#	
Inappropriate use of specialist equipment	6*		#	#	

provided for disabled or wheelchair client accessibility

Using Hackney Carriage without a sealed taxi meter fitted to the vehicle

Defective Tyres

Failure to maintain lights

Failure to present vehicle for inspection

Using Licensed vehicle without MOT

Failure to wear seatbelt

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