

Taxi Operator Forum - 6 January 2025

12-1.30pm

Notes

Item and discussion	Operator feedback						
Introductions							
<p>Christian Moore (CM) opened the forum and set out the agenda for the session.</p>	<p>In attendance from West Suffolk Council:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Cllr Gerald Kelly</td> <td>Portfolio Holder for Governance, Regulatory and Environment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Christian Moore</td> <td>Food, Safety and Licensing Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tim Cleary</td> <td>Senior Licensing Policy Officer</td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Gerald Kelly	Portfolio Holder for Governance, Regulatory and Environment	Christian Moore	Food, Safety and Licensing Manager	Tim Cleary	Senior Licensing Policy Officer
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Christian Moore	Food, Safety and Licensing Manager						
Tim Cleary	Senior Licensing Policy Officer						
West Suffolk approved garages							
<p>CM provided an update on the recent changes to the approved testing centres.</p>	<p>Concerns were raised regarding the differences between fees for taxi tests and MOT's.</p> <p>Christian Moore (CM) explained the price difference is due to inflation, labour costs and more bespoke requirements for Taxi Tests however noting that garages could charge less if they wanted to.</p> <p>A question was raised on why the West Suffolk Operational Hub charged the maximum amount as a council entity.</p> <p>CM said whilst it was council, they were a separate operation so not something Licensing could influence.</p> <p>CM encouraged drivers to report any specific issues surrounding taxi inspections and MOT's.</p> <p>CM also said we would circulate the taxi inspection guidelines to operators. We are in the process of updating it, so will make it available as soon as it is ready.</p>						
Vehicle age requirements							
<p>CM provided an update on the changes to vehicle age requirements which are due to come into effect from 1 April 2025</p>	<p>There was an understanding that the vehicle age was going to be raised to seven years (rather than five).</p> <p>CM advised that all decision minutes had been reviewed and this is no mention of a change, but CM did say a review of the age requirement would take place.</p>						

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	<p>Cllr Kelly added that he was looking forward to the new policy and he would endeavour to make changes where possible.</p> <p>A question was asked about re-licensing earlier than the expiry date, however one of the Licensing Officers confirmed that in order to do that, they would have to surrender the licence and re-apply for a new one.</p>
Best practice guidance	
<p>CM explained that updates had been made to the 2010 Best practice document.</p>	
Taxi and private hire vehicle policy	
<p>CM provided an update on the forthcoming review of the taxi and private hire vehicle policy and said the document would be split into smaller sections for review by the trade at future engagement sessions.</p>	<p>CM said that regular operator engagement would be scheduled to discuss changes to policy.</p> <p>CM said that vehicle standards must always be implemented but that the BPG must be considered.</p> <p>Cllr Kelly said that the policy needs to be the best fit for everybody, so we really want input from the trade.</p>
Fees and charges	
<p>CM explained that licensing fees are reviewed every three years.</p>	<p>CM said that calculations will be made at the end of 2025 to be implemented from April 2026.</p> <p>There was a concern that operator feeds are the same for all operators, regardless of how many vehicles they operate.</p> <p>CM said that it takes the same amount of time to review and process applications for operators with one vehicle as those with a much larger fleet. However, this will be reviewed to ensure that this is still current, and Cllr Kelly was keen to look at this.</p>
Digital applications	
<p>CM gave an update on digital applications</p>	
Unmet demand survey	
<p>CM shared the results of the Unmet Demand Survey</p>	<p>The question was asked on how West Suffolk Council proposed to cure unmet demand.</p> <p>CM said we needed to capture the trade views and take to licensing committee.</p>

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	<p>Recommendations are reported to Cllr Dicker as chair of the regulatory committee and then to Cllr Kelly as portfolio holder so they can be taken to cabinet.</p> <p>CM said that current findings were that no cap on the number of taxis, no additional requirements for WAV's and no merging of two zones was necessary.</p> <p>Cllr Kelly said that the current market has changed with a decrease in nightlife and a lack of bus service. He asked operators to let us know if they had any suggestions.</p>
Questions and feedback	
1. Concerns raised that items which are noted as advisories on MOT will subsequently fail on inspection document.	CM said the team would look into this.
2. Query around a failed taxi inspection but passed MOT by the same garage.	A licensing officer said that they have carried out inspections with all approved garages and it has been re-iterated that vehicles should only fail over mechanical safety issues.
3. An operator said that when a vehicle is suspended due to a taxi test failure, the licence is not always unsuspended as quickly as to when it is suspended.	We will look to improve this, but that if the vehicle has passed, it can immediately be used if the email has been sent with the updated paperwork.
4. An operator said that MOT advisories are being put down as failures on taxi tests.	Request for drivers to inform us of instances when this has occurred so we can investigate.
5. The question was then asked if a vehicle passes an MOT why does it then fail the taxi test?	1. Different vehicle standards currently apply.
CM asked attendees how they feel future sessions should be conducted.	We will send a link to a survey to find out preferences.

A copy of the presentation is available on the West Suffolk Council website: [Taxi driver news](#)