



Sandwell

Metropolitan Borough Council

**Annual Report of the
Licensing
(Miscellaneous)
Committee
2014/15**

Foreword – Chair of the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Committee

My name is Councillor Mohammed Rouf and I am Chair of the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Committee. The Committee has considered 128 individual matters relating to Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing throughout the year covering a wide variety of issues.

The Committee deals with matters related to a number of licensing functions, the majority of which were for applications or reviews of hackney carriage and private hire licences.

The Committee works in conjunction with the Taxi Licensing Office to ensure that all the public safety duties and financial obligations of licence holders are complied with fully and within the parameters of the law. Many things impact and shape this type of licensing, including matters such as recent high profile incidents in Rotherham and Rochdale relating to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the implementation of the Deregulation Bill in the coming months.

The decisions made by the Committee impact significantly on the livelihood of the licensed trade and all decisions are taken after considerable thought and debate. However, this is balanced against the primary function of the Committee, which is to ensure that members of the public can feel confident and safe when using Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriages in Sandwell. I am confident that the decisions made by the Committee make travelling in a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle a pleasant and safer experience with drivers who fulfil the Council's stringent requirements.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank fellow Members of the Council and staff involved in the licensing process for their work throughout the year and I look forward to the coming year and the challenges it presents in shaping the future of taxi provision within Sandwell.



Cllr Mohammed Rouf
Chair of Licensing (Miscellaneous) Committee

1. The Licensing (Miscellaneous) Committee

The Licensing (Miscellaneous) Committee is established by Council each year. Its purpose is to determine all matters in relation to the Council's powers and duties under the following Acts and Regulations:-

- Town Police Clauses Act 1847;
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976;
- House to House Collections Act 1939;
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982;
- The Police, Factories etc. (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1916;
- Consumer Credit Act 1974;
- Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975;
- Part II of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1972.

Membership of the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Committee was as follows:-

- Cllr Mohammed Rouf (Chair)
- Cllr Bob Price (Vice-Chair)
- Cllr Pam Hughes
- Cllr Olwen Jones
- Cllr Gurcharan Singh Sidhu
- Cllr Elaine Costigan
- Cllr Sharon Davies

The Committee receives officer support from Licensing Managers, Democratic Services and Legal Services.

The key benefits of the Licensing (Miscellaneous) Committee can be seen as:-

- the protection of public health and safety;
- the establishment of professional and respected hackney carriage and private hire trades.

2. Business

During the year the Committee considered 128 reports regarding the grant or renewal of a licence or a review of an existing licence. All the reports considered were Private Hire or Hackney Carriage matters.

Date	Granted	Renewed	Suspended	Revoked	Refused	Adjourned/ Deferred	Warned	No Action	Total
08/04/2014			5	1	1				7
29/04/2014	8		1	1		2	1		13
13/05/2014			1	1	1	1			4
03/06/2014	1			1	1	2	1		6
01/07/2014	1		2	1	1	5	3		13
17/07/2014			3			5	4		12
05/08/2014	2		1		1	1	2		7
26/08/2014	3		2			2	2		9
23/09/2014		1	1		2	1	1	1	7
21/10/2014	2		6				3		11
18/11/2014	3		1			2			6
16/12/2014	1		1		1	3	3		9
13/01/2015					4	1	2		7
17/02/2015	1		2		1	2	4		10
03/03/2015	1		1			1	3	1	7
Total	23	1	27	5	13	28	29	2	128

3. Commentary on the work of the Committee

New Policies

There have been no changes in Council Policy during the year. However, a proposal has been made to amend the criteria for licensing Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles, which will be considered during the next municipal year.

The Committee has again been extremely busy throughout the year; the nature of the Licensing Service ensures a high volume of cases are brought to the attention of the Committee for a decision. A number of functions relating to elements of operational activities have been delegated to authorised officers, who are then able to maintain the general standard of operators, drivers and their vehicles.

Delegations to Officers

During the year the Taxi Licensing Manager has made the following delegated decisions which have resulted in fewer reports being considered by the Committee:-

32 – Driver Applications refused due to the applicant failing to pass the Knowledge Test within three attempts.

17 – Warning Letters issued due to failing to declare minor road traffic endorsements on application or within the designated time period.

14 – Licensed drivers had their licence suspended with immediate effect on the grounds of public safety due to having committed or being investigated for criminal offences of a serious nature.

331 – Private Hire Vehicle Licences were granted under the Council's Exceptional Condition Policy.

12 – Drivers had their licence suspended with immediate effect on the grounds of public safety due to having a serious medical condition which rendered them unfit to continue to drive a licensed vehicle.

13 – Driver/Operators had their licences extended without prejudice prior to attendance at Licensing Committee.

4. The Committee's Main Achievements

The Committee believes its key achievements during the year were:-

- Continuing to uphold and ensure public safety;
- Increased the efficiency of the licensing process by delegating additional functions to the Licensing Manager, such as the grant of private hire vehicle licences under the exceptional conditions process. This has reduced committee time, which in turn has enabled the time for people waiting to attend committee meetings to be significantly reduced.

5. Contribution to Scorecard Priorities

The Licensing process contributes to the Scorecard priority of "Great Prospects" by making opportunities available for employment locally. The service indirectly supports within great prospects by investing in business, people and jobs.

Through the provision of the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage licensing service, the Licensing Section is committed to contributing to the Scorecard Priority of "Great Place".

6. Training and Development

Training has been provided to all members of the Committee on the following topics:-

- New Member Training.
- Relevant legislation.
- Case law.
- Declarations of interest.

7. Conclusion

The Committee carries out its role with a view to ensuring the public are kept safe from harm. In making its decisions, the Committee puts this perspective at the forefront of its decision making.

Members and officers are currently working on reviewing Council Policy and delegations to reduce committee time and improve the level of service offered to licence holders. This should provide further assurances to the public in the knowledge that the Council views the safety of its citizens as paramount in carrying out this function.