

Taxi Licensing – Summary of Service Improvement Plan

1 August 2022

Name of Service: Taxi Licensing	Date SIP Created: 09/08/21	Date SIP Updated: 01/08/22
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Ref	Issue	Action Plan	Summary of Comments from Sandwell Private Hire Driver Association August 2022	Status
1	Delays from when application submitted until notification of issue	Applications are being allocated to a named officer on day of receipt. Named officer begins actioning on day of receipt with initial contact with applicant attempted within 2 working days.	No Comment	Completed -August 21 - Monitoring Ongoing
		Service Standards are monitored by Managers	No Comment	Completed September 21 - Monitoring In Place
2	Payment options available – only phone or via chip and pin. Request for online payment option.	Online payment option available the MySandwell system as an interim option until VERSO Go Live is complete.	No Comment	Interim solution completed – August 21 Verso system for payment completed January 2022
3	Garage appointments can't be booked without payment, payment is too slow.	Garage appointments are given on expiry reminder letter. Online payment to be available to speed up bookings. Garage appointment availability is monitored by managers.	No Comment	Completed August 21 – Monitoring Ongoing Online payments for garage bookings with Waterfall Lane garage in place. A further development for booking appointments online is due to Go Live end October 2022

4	Phone is not being answered and always engaged. <i>NB.Phone is on CC6 platform so calls enter a queueing system and do not get an engaged tone.</i>	Telephony performance is monitored daily. Summary is provided within the weekly management performance report to senior managers. There has been a reduction in number of calls received.	No Comment	Complete with Service Level Agreement set and agreed – Monitoring Ongoing
Comment not an action	Reduction in licence holders number from 2400 to 1300.	A reduction has been seen in licence holders. This could be attributed to a number of factors although reasons for non-renewal are not captured on system to provide any meaningful analysis.	Original comment re-stated	No specific action required. SMBC has been unable to verify the numbers quoted however a reduction has been seen in licence holders. This could be attributed to a number of factors although reasons for non-renewal are not captured on system to provide any meaningful analysis.
5	Trade report they cannot get office appointments at Waterfall Lane.	Office open for appointments Monday to Friday for two rows to meet demand. Two rows operating 15, 30 and 60 minute slots based on customer need.	No Comment	Completed August 21 - Monitoring Ongoing
	Trade requesting increase from 2 rows of appointments to 3 rows, no closure over lunchtime, want a queuing/drop in approach.	Managers monitor availability on a daily and weekly basis opening up further availability as required. Where wait time exceeds 5 working days.	No Comment	Completed August 21 - Monitoring Ongoing
		Benchmarking exercise to be undertaken on wait times for appointments.	No Comment	Completed May 2022 – regionally many Local Authorities no longer provide appointment services. Sandwell's appointment

				availability maintained within 5 working days.
		Sandwell webpage links to provider websites which detail expected wait times where available.	No Comment	Completed March 2022
6	Concerns raised regarding standards of customer service to trade.	Training Needs Analysis includes training for delivering good customer service. Liaising with Council Learning and Development to deliver a bespoke refresher session early in the New Year.	SHPDA consider this unresolved	Training was completed March 2022. The service has advised that customers may raise any issues/incidents, with details, so that they can be investigated.
7	Fees are very high in comparison with neighbours. Want a review of fees and processes benchmark with other LA's.	Director committed to instigate fee review by Corporate Finance.	SPHDA consider this unresolved and stating frustration from licensed drivers in the delay. Requesting this be resolved as soon as possible. Want benchmarking as part of process.	Fee Review was completed in December 2021 and reported to Licensing Committee in February 2022, and fees confirmed by Council in March 2022. Fee comparison across of West Midlands LAs has been completed to allow a sense check of fee setting however, fees cannot be set on the basis of other LAs fees. Fees are set based on the costs of delivering the service and therefore is based on the model of delivery.
8	New vehicles confusion over M1* Classification other councils are not asking for the same things	Benchmarking exercise against neighbouring authority's policy requirements regarding M1 classification to be undertaken.	Accepted but want more clarity as DVSA don't do if vehicle is over 10 year old	Updated information sent to customers and uploaded to webpages September 2021

	*M1 is the vehicle classification for a car used for the carriage of passengers with more than eight seats in addition to the driver seat			Benchmarking identified M1 is a standard requirement. If M1 classification cannot be confirmed the vehicle will be refused a license.
9	Want a badge the same as other LA's with all the expiry dates listed negating the need for reminders.	VERSO will be capable of producing driver badges in the requested card format.	SPHDA commented that this has not started	To be considered by Licensing Committee on 16 August 2022
10	Why do we need 2 badges other LA's don't ask for 2 badges. Trade state that passengers have text of all details to identify themselves to passenger.	Two badges are required as per Policy. This is public safety reasons to clearly identify a licenced driver to a passenger. Not all passengers book online or on an app so require a mechanism to check they are taking a vehicle with a licenced driver.	No Comment	Complete. Response provided in September 2021 that this requirement is on the grounds of public safety.
		Further clarity provided by trade at Forum that part of the concern relates to safety of drivers wearing a badge on a lanyard. Clips are now available as an alternative for those drivers who prefer.	No Comment	Completed to provide an option for clips in November 2021
11	Trade do not want 2 plates for vehicles, state other LA's have smaller stickers not plates.	A comparison cannot be made with TfL as they operate to different legislation. Plates sizes nationally are standard.	No Comment	Confirmed this comparison is with Transport for London who operate to different legislation.
12	Want other approved garages	Consider as part of Licensing Policy review.	Request to have more options of garages to use for inspections.	This will be considered by Licensing Committee on 16 August 2022

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13	Why can't we have dual licenses (being told once you go hackney to private hire are told they can't change back, Birmingham are given a dual badge automatically)	Dual Licences are already a licence option available. HCD has additional licence conditions/standards to meet preventing ease of return to HCD from PHD.	Drivers who have Hackney Badges should be given a Dual Badge and all badge prices should be same	This will be considered by Licensing Committee on 16 August 2022.
14	IT system needs replacing	Implementation of VERSO software	Need the system in place for efficiency	New IT software development and installation is substantially progressed. Phase 1 was completed January 22. All licenses are now able to be issued and paid for online. Phase 2 with further minor elements of improvements currently due to Go Live by end October 2022.
15	Why do we need the signature of the base operator? (Duty of driver to notify change of base within 7 days, operators send monthly list through so can check, why need more than once repeat)	.Emails from Operator base are already being accepted. Not all Operators send through a monthly list. Due to frequency of moves Operators could be sending updates several times each week, hence policy position requires Driver to do this. This is as simple as an email to Taxi Licensing. This is also a notification option being built into VERSO.	No Comment	Lists from Operators are not practical due to frequency of moves. Therefore the requirement for drivers to notify the licensing office within 7 days of a move is retained – this is as simple as an email to the office. No further action proposed.
16	Why don't we allow written off vehicles if in a repairable category.	Issue can be considered by Licensing Committee	No Comment	This will be considered by Licensing Committee on 16 August 2022.

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17	Trade state that vehicle replacements are taking 4 weeks which is too long.	Replacement applications are allocated upon receipt and processing begins on day of receipt.	No Comment	Complete. Vehicle replacement processing are currently within 5 working from receipt of a complete application
18	Interim checks – why do we have 2 a year?	Interim safety checks to be considered	Request to reduce to 1 safety check	Complete. In April 22 SMBC advised that policy amended to include 1 interim safety check at 6 months for all vehicles. All license holders notified by email or letter in April 22.
19	DBS portability Ensure information up to date on website	This will be part of the National Statutory Standards	No Comment	Complete. In April 22 advised that policy amended to include DBS portability across Licensing Authorities. All license holder notified by email or letter in April 22
20	Medicals- trade request to use other Doctors rather than the current single NHS provider	To be considered.	Concern that cost of medicals via NHS provider is more expensive	This will be considered by Licensing Committee on 16 August 2022.
21	Review Hackney Carriage Fare	Following receipt of a fare increase from drivers, a consultation was undertaken which did not attract any objections.	No Comment	Complete. Fee increase effective as of 19 May 2022
22	Colour restriction on Hackney Carriage should be abolished.	To be considered as part of Licensing Policy review.	Larger private hire vehicles have restrictions on colour due to its resemblance to hackney	This will be considered by Licensing Committee on 16 August 2022.

23	Black colour restriction on Mini Bus as Private Hire should be abolished.	To be considered as part of Licensing Policy review.	private hire bigger cars have restriction on colour due to its resemblance on hackney	This will be considered by Licensing Committee on 16 August 2022.
24	No refund policy - should be change into period of use + service charges then refund rest of funds if any one changed mind.	The relates to the cancellation policy	This should be reviewed	A refund minus an administration fee is given if an applicant withdraws prior to issue of licence. There is no refund once a license has been issued. It is not recommended to amend the refund policy.
Additional Point raised by SPHDA in August 2022				
1	All PHD should allow to use Bus Lane	Bus gates and lanes in Sandwell allow only Hackney Carriage Vehicles, buses and vehicles that carry 9 people or more to use them. Private Hire vehicles are not permitted to use bus gates and lanes. There are no plans to change the legal order relating to the use of bus lanes and gates. A benchmarking exercise showed that, whilst each Local Authority has their own individual orders relating to this, the Sandwell order is in line with the position taken by neighbouring authorities.		A response to SPHDA on this query has been provided previously. It was further advised that whilst this is the Council's position, and this is in line with the position taken by neighbouring authorities, any such requests can be made directly to Highways for consideration via the customer portal.