

WRS Board

16th February 2017

Countywide Licensing Work Plan.

Recommendation

That the Board notes the report.

Report

This report is to give Members of the Board an overview of the type of policy work that has been carried out by the Licensing Team on behalf of the six partners during the last twelve months and a brief synopsis of the planned work going forward for 2017-18.

As members will be aware, Licensing is a reserved matter under the partnership agreement meaning that, whilst officers of WRS can act under delegated authority to deal with licensing issues (e.g. issuing licences, taking enforcement action, etc.) all matters of policy must be determined by each district.

Each partner Council has its own Licensing Committee cycle with, on average, around 4 or 5 full Licensing Committee meetings per year depending on need.

One of the main objectives for the team in 2016-17 was to work with each of the Licensing Committee Chairs to introduce a structured approach to rolling agenda items for future committee meetings. This involved the introduction of individual district rolling Committee Work Plans that included all proposed future meeting dates, with pre-planned policy review information allocated alongside the normal fixed agenda items. This accomplished two things

- Giving members a more informed view of upcoming agenda items for each Committee so they could come to a view of what they wanted;
- Allowed the policy workflow for each district to be better planned and managed by officers on a countywide basis.

Appendix 1 contains tables outlining the key policy areas covered by the team in each district during 2016/17 and a look ahead to the proposed work programme with each committee for 2017/18.

For next financial year, the main focus will be to expand this piece of work into a long term strategic programme for taking policy forward. Because of the longer term nature of issues such as disabled access vehicles and changes to aspects of policy around vehicle type and description, this could mean developing a 5-10 year countywide rolling program of policy reviews for a number of the partners. It is considered best practice that each district council has a robust policy review program in place to ensure that their individual policies are still relevant to the subject matter and that they meet any needs and objectives set down by legislation.

Part of the review process will involve consideration of the revised Councillor Handbook on Taxi Licensing, published in December 2016, and the much anticipated "Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Statutory and Best Practice Guidance," due out in early spring.

Both of these documents will influence future policy development across the partner authorities and Licensing Officers will be focused on ensuring local policies meet best practice guidance wherever possible.

For example each licensing authority currently has a policy on the application of the "supplemental guidance to the relevance of convictions" which aids officers and Members in the decision process on whether a taxi driver is fit and proper to hold a licence. The Licensing team is currently developing a much wider policy document which, if adopted by members, would incorporate the wider scope of driving history/ experience, medical fitness, criminal and driving convictions, warnings, reprimands and any valid complaints into the process for considering whether a driver was fit and proper. This would obviously seek to drive up standards within our current driver cohort and ensure that only the right people are endorsed as drivers by the partner authorities. Hopefully such steps would protect the reputation of the relevant licensing authorities, build on historic protections for the travelling public and help raise the level of kudos associated with being an authorised driver.

We are hoping to share this with Licensing Committees early to late Spring and will develop other policy initiatives once the full contents of best practice guidance are known.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Appendix 1 2016/17 Committee Work plan
