



Annual Licensing Report

1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give the Licensing and Appeals Committee:
- an overview of the work undertaken by the licensing service over the preceding twelve months
 - an update on existing projects and policies
 - an overview of future proposals
- 1.2 The period covered by the information note is 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICE

- 2.1 The service consists of a licensing manager, one licensing officer and two assistant licensing officers responsible for the administration and enforcement of licensing legislation.
- 2.2 The team is assisted by officers in the Management Support Unit (MSU) who undertake a range of administrative functions for the service ranging from basic enquiries to the processing of low risk applications.
- 2.2 A recruitment exercise was undertaken in October 2019 to replace the senior licensing officer with two assistant licensing officers to enable the service to undertake additional activities, predominately more engagement, enforcement and income generation. The licensing officer and assistant licensing officer posts are all career-graded to encourage staff development and assist with staff retention and service resilience.
- 2.3 All activities undertaken by the licensing service are in fulfilment of statutory duties placed on the Council.
- 2.4 The licensing of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs), caravan and camping sites, and skin piercers is undertaken by the Environmental Health Service. The licensing of the use of Council land is undertaken by the Greenspace Service.
- 2.5 The licensing service's main activities are the determination, issue and enforcement of licences/consents/permits relating to the following activities:

Alcohol, entertainment and late-night refreshment

- 2.5.1 This includes:
- all sales of alcohol
 - performance of plays
 - exhibition of films
 - indoor sporting events
 - boxing and wrestling
 - performance of live music
 - playing of recorded music
 - performance of dance
 - sale of hot food/drink between the hours of 11pm and 5am)

- 2.5.2 Examples of premises that fall within this regime are pubs, members clubs, cinemas, community halls, late night takeaway shops, theatres, off licences, supermarkets, boxing/wrestling venues, music concerts and outdoor music festivals.
- 2.5.3 Temporary event notices (TENs) also fall within this regime; they are temporary permissions to carry out any combination of the above licensable activities. They are most frequently used by premises that do not have a permanent premises licence, for example a school fete or PTA fundraiser. Additionally, permanent premises licence holders use them for temporary extensions to existing licenced hours.
- 2.5.4 TENs are a 'light touch approach' to licensing and are less restrictive than a permanent premises licence as conditions cannot be attached. For that reason, prescribed limits apply to the number of TENs per person and per premises each year and the audience capacity is restricted to 499 persons at any one time.

Gambling

- 2.5.4 Examples of premises that fall within this regime are betting shops, bingo halls, casinos, racing track betting, amusement arcades and poker clubs.
- 2.5.5 It also includes small society lotteries, raffles and gaming machine permits.

Taxis and private hire

- 2.5.6 This includes taxi (hackney carriage) and private hire drivers, private hire operators, taxis and private hire vehicles.

Street trading

- 2.5.7 This covers the sale of goods in the street and any land open to the public without payment within the four main towns and adjacent to the main arterial routes.
- 2.5.8 It includes mobile vendors (such as burger vans, sandwich trucks or ice cream vans), markets (other than Charter or licensed local authority markets), car boot sales and temporary stalls.

Charitable collections

- 2.5.9 This covers collection of money in the street, or the collection of money or goods by going house to house, in the four main towns.
- 2.5.10 Examples of collections covered by this regime include charity collections, sale of goods for charitable purposes, clothing collection bags or flower sellers going from pub to pub on Valentine's Day.

Animal establishments

- 2.5.11 This regime is targeted at ensuring the welfare of animals and covers premises such as kennels, catteries, home boarders, dog breeders, zoos, horse riding schools, pet shops, dangerous wild animals and dog day crèches.
- 2.5.12 Additionally, since September 2018, this now includes the licensing of persons that keep and/or train animals for the purposes of performances and/or exhibitions, for example petting zoos.

Sex establishments

2.5.13 This covers sex shops, sex cinemas or sexual entertainment venues (for example, lap dancing or pole dancing clubs).

Scrap metal dealers

2.5.14 This covers any site that:

- buys or sells scrap metal
- recovers salvageable parts from motor vehicles for re-use or sale
- buys written-off vehicles, repairs and resells them

2.5.15 It also includes mobile collectors that travel door-to-door collecting scrap metal.

Hypnotism

2.5.16 This includes all performances of hypnotism for the purpose of entertaining an audience.

Pavement Licences

2.5.17 To assist the recovery of business after the national lockdown and during continued restrictions, Government introduced a new temporary permission for tables and chairs outside of premises offering food and/or drink called a pavement licence.

2.5.18 These are administered by district and borough councils as a fast-track, cost effective method to assist businesses until 30 September 2021 and are an alternative to the County Council issued street café licences. Street café licences are still available and pavement licences will need to be replaced by street café licences when these temporary measures expire.

3. INSPECTIONS

3.1 The licensing service undertakes a series of risk-based planned inspections which were previously reported by way of a local performance indicator (LPI). The number of programmed inspections undertaken within the reporting period was:

INSPECTIONS			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Animal Inspection	21	39	25
Gambling Insp - Betting (other)	11	2	1
Licensed Premises (alcohol/entertainment/LNR)	260	89	74
Private Hire Operator Insp	20	21	5
Scrap Metal Site	3	4	1
Sex Establishment	1	1	0
	316	156	106

3.2 As reported in last year's Annual Report, the licensing manager decided to suspend the existing inspection regime with a view to implementing a more appropriate risk-based scheme that incorporated all site visits from January 2020.

- 3.3 The new inspection regime was trialled from January 2020 and was proving successful however the national lockdown and continued restrictions has severely limited face-to-face inspections. The inspection regime will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.
- 3.4 Previously, all alcohol licensed premises were inspected at least annually irrespective of whether the premises had attracted any complaints or had caused concern. The inspection regime did not accurately reflect the risk to the public and often inconvenienced well-run premises. Officers' limited time was not being focussed on the most appropriate premises and all inspections were not being recorded.
- 3.5 Responding to suggestions raised at last year's annual Licensing and Appeals Committee meeting, the new inspection regime records all inspections including joint visits with the police or other Council services plus evening licensing inspections.
- 3.6 A new risk rated inspection scheme has been introduced whereby more focus is placed on management capability, complaint history and risk to the public so that officer time is more focussed on appropriate premises.
- 3.7 The additional resource in the team has also allowed the introduction of courtesy visits to premises whenever there is a change in ownership, management or a change of business model. This ensures that we develop a relationship with the business and ensure they fully understand their responsibilities and licence conditions at an early stage rather than intervention when problems arise.

4. APPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The number of applications processed during the reporting period was:

			Number of applications received								
			2017/18			2018/19			2019/20		
Animal Licensing	Animal Activity Licence	New	13			11			3		
		Amend a schedule of animals (No visit)	1			1			0		
		Renewal	28	42	42	28	40	40	12	15	15
Scrap Metal	Site Licence	New	1			0			0		
		Renewal	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	2
Alcohol, Entertainment and Late Night Refreshment	Club Premises Certificate	Replacement	2			2			0		
		Minor Variation	1	3		0	2		0	0	
	Film Classification	New	1	1		0	0		0	0	
		Late TEN	126			132			86		
	Temporary Event Notice	TEN	519	645		612	744		288	374	
		New	74			102			58		
	Personal Licence	Replacement licence	0			6			2		
		Change of name or address	29	103		23	131		14	74	
	Premises Licence	New	20			32			21		
		Change of name or address	8			8			5		
		Vary DPS	90			105			80		
		Transfer	32			28			26		
		Variation	11			9			6		
		Minor Variation	20			10			10		
		Review	0			2			0		
Replacement		5			10			3			
Notification of Interest		2	188	940	0	204	1081	0	151	539	

			2017/18			2018/19			2019/20		
Gambling	Notification of 2 or less Gaming Machines	New	10	10		5	5		8	8	
		Variation	0			2			1		
	Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permits	Replacement licence	0			1			0		
		New	0			0			1		
		Transfer	0	0		1	4		0	2	
	Betting Premises	Replacement licence	0			1			0		
		Transfer	0	0		1	2		0	0	
	Small Society Lottery	New	30			38			20		
Renewal		45	75	85	45	83	94	44	64	74	
Charitable Collections	House to House Collection	New	36			44			29		
	Street Collection	New	45	81	81	47	91	91	34	63	63
Sex	Sex Shop	Renewal	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Street Trading	Street Trading (Fixed Pitch)	New	3			4			4		
		Renewal	5	8		3	7		0	4	
	Street Trading (Town Centre Consent)	New	2			1			0		
		Renewal	1	3		4	5		4	4	
	Street Trading (Transient Trader)	New	1	1		1	1			0	
	Street Trading (Special Event/Market)	New	0	0		0	0		1	1	
	Pavement Licences	New	0	0	12	0	0	13	6	6	15
Taxi and Private Hire	Dual Driver	Change of details	6			5			5		
		Upgrade to dual	7			12			3		
		Replacement licence	1			1			2		
		Replacement badge	1			1			0		
		New	2			3			2		
	Renewal	17	34		45	67		24	36		
	Taxi Driver	Change of details	6			4			4		
		Replacement licence	1			0			1		
		Replacement badge	1			0			0		
		Upgrade from PHD	0			3			0		
		Renewal	46			57			35		
	New	1	55		1	65		0	40		
	Taxi Vehicle	Change of details	13			4			4		
		Transfer of ownership	11			9			14		
		New	36			35			61		
		Renewal	199			209			220		
		Internal holder / plate	0			1			4		
		Replacement licence	12			2			0		
		Replacement plate	6			2			3		
		Temporary Plate	15	232		9	271		6	312	
	Private Hire Driver	Change of details	5			6			5		
		Replacement badge	1			0			1		
		Replacement licence	0			1			1		
		Renewal	20			26			18		
		New	39			22			9		
	Upgrade to HCD	2	67		1	56		0	34		
	Private Hire Operator	Change of name or address	1			1			5		
		New	3			2			4		
		Renewal	6	10		2	5		6	15	
	Private Hire Vehicle	Change of details	4			3			5		
Transfer of ownership		1			2			2			
New		29			29			24			
Renewal		99			114			100			
Internal holder / plate		0			1			0			
Replacement licence		6			1			0			
Replacement plate		4			2			2			
Temporary Plate	2	145	603	1	153	617	4	137	574		

TOTAL	1765	TOTAL	1937	TOTAL	1342
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- 4.2 The impact of the lockdown and current restrictions has had a significant impact on the number of applications received.

5. CURRENT LICENCES

- 5.1 As at 30 September 2020, the number of current licences issued by the licensing service was:

TOTAL LICENCES				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Adult Gaming Centre Premises Licence		1	1	1
* Animal Boarding Establishment	12		n/a	n/a
* Dangerous Wild Animals	1		n/a	n/a
* Dog Breeding Establishment	1		n/a	n/a
* Dog Day Creche	1		n/a	n/a
* Home Boarding	18		n/a	n/a
* Pet Shop	4		n/a	n/a
* Riding Establishment	2		n/a	n/a
* Animal Activity Licence	0	39	39	35
Betting (Other) Premises Licence		19	18	12
Club Gaming Machine Permit		2	2	2
Club Gaming Permit		1	1	1
Club Premises Certificate		35	35	31
Dual Driver		102	97	92
Fast Track Club Gaming Machine Permit		9	9	9
Fast Track Club Gaming Permit		2	2	2
House to House Collection		39	31	28
Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permit		14	14	15
Notification of 2 or less Gaming Machines		77	74	78
Pavement Licences #		0	0	6
Personal Licence		1521	1609	1654
Premises Licence		495	511	475
Private Hire Driver		147	133	110
Private Hire Operator		40	34	32
Private Hire Vehicle		109	98	86
Scrap Metal Dealer Site		4	4	4
Sex Shop		1	1	0
Small Society Lotteries		140	77	63
Street Collection		55	46	27
Street Trading (Fixed Pitch)		2	6	0
Street Trading (Special Event/Market Consent)		0	0	1
Street Trading (Town Centre Consent)		4	5	4
Taxi Driver		138	124	119
Taxi Vehicle		169	181	195
Unlicensed FEC Gaming Permit		1	1	1
		3166	3153	3083

* From September 2018, previous separate animal licensing legislation was repealed and replaced with a single licence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006

A new fast-track temporary measure to assist with Covid-19 recovery

- 5.2 In addition to these licences which, in most cases, are granted in perpetuity the licensing service also issued 374 temporary event notices which are specific to one off small-scale events during the period covered by this report.

5.3 The impact of the lockdown and current restrictions has had a significant impact on the number of temporary event notices as most community events have been cancelled this year.

6. MISCELLANEOUS SERVICE REQUESTS

6.1 The licensing service receives a high number of service requests in writing and by telephone, most notably requests for advice on the need for and the submission of an application.

6.2 The high volume of telephone requests is not currently quantifiable as many are not recorded on the database if they can be resolved either at the time of the call or by a return telephone call or email. Those that require a more detailed response, or an investigation are logged as service requests

6.3 In addition to service requests, the licensing service also undertakes a number of functions related to taxi and private hire licensing that are an integral part of assessing drivers' ability to meet the 'fit and proper' person test and that vehicles are roadworthy and compliant with policy. Due to lockdown and the ongoing restrictions, face-to-face services are not currently available that has reduced the number of taxi-related services provided.

6.4 The number of recorded service requests and ancillary functions within the reporting period was:

MISCELLANEOUS			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Service requests	205	273	269
Taxi complaints	40	56	28
Taxi compliance tests	363	377	387
Taxi Verbal knowledge tests	118	88	30
Taxi computerised topographical tests	40	52	10
Taxi DBS/Right to Work appointments	155	168	66
	921	1014	790

6.5 The licensing service receives a significant number of freedom of information (FOI) requests, mainly in relation to taxi and private hire licensing or animals. The requests often involve considerable officer time searching the database and extracting the specific information requested. The development of the public register has decreased the number of requests requiring a response however this still takes a disproportionate amount of officer time.

6.6 In last year's report the Committee was advised that a refused FOI was appealed to First Tier Tribunal and the decision was awaited. The Court have since upheld the Information Commissioner's decision that North Hertfordshire District Council was right to refuse to supply licensed vehicle registration numbers.

7. COVID-19

7.1 Whilst the lockdown and ongoing national restrictions reduced the number of applications and service requests, dealing with many trade enquiries and ensuring the

trade was regularly updated on new guidance and regulations was, and still is to a lesser extent, a substantial task.

- 7.2 Understandably, businesses were keen to ensure they complied with the multitude of different guidance notes and legislation, so officers dealt with many telephone enquiries that were not recorded as service requests.
- 7.3 Regular updates were sent the relevant premises including joint letters from the Licensing Service, the Police and the Director of Public Health.
- 7.4 Towards the end of March, officers had to implement a revised taxi and private hire administration service to ensure continuity of trade for those drivers that wished to continue to work. In the absence of face-to-face appointments for DBS and knowledge tests, and GPs not being able to offer medicals, this proved a challenge.
- 7.5 Temporary measures were implemented to ensure that all taxi and private hire renewals could be processed on time and officers undertook two days of continual compliance testing on all vehicles due to expire between April and June. A temporary change to the taxi and private hire policy was permitted that allowed the installation of protective screens for drivers.
- 7.6 Regular newsletters were sent to the taxi and private hire trade explaining the regulations and guidance in easy to understand language. Links were also supplied to the Council's Covid-19 webpages so that licence holders were aware of the various financial assistance available.
- 7.7 Unfortunately, accepting applications from new drivers that need to undertake a DBS for the first time, a medical and knowledge tests had to be suspended. One of the challenges currently faced is how can officers resume this service under the ongoing restrictions.
- 7.8 Given the impact of the lockdown and ongoing restrictions to the taxi and private hire trade, officers undertook a survey of taxi and private hire licence holders to assess the Council's response to Covid-19. The results of the survey are attached as an Appendix to this report.
- 7.9 When licensed premises were permitted to re-open after lockdown, officers worked with the police to visit all licensed premises in the four main towns on the first day of opening.

8. LICENSING HEARINGS

- 8.1 Applications under the Licensing Act 2003 for new, varied or reviewed premises licences/club premises certificates that receive representations are determined by a licensing and appeals sub-committee.
- 8.2 The number of sub-committee hearings held within the reporting period was five (5).
- 8.3 There is a right of appeal to the Magistrates Court against the decision of a licensing sub-committee however no decisions during the reporting period were subject to appeal.
- 8.4 A licensing and appeals sub-committee would also determine the following applications:
 - Contested premises licence applications under the Gambling Act 2005
 - All applications for new sex establishments

No such applications were received during the reporting period.

8.5 All other licensing decisions are delegated to the Licensing Manager.

9. LICENSING FEES

9.1 Established licensing fee case law, supported by the *Hemming* judgement prevents local authorities from making a profit from licensing fees. The *Hemming* judgement indicated that fees can only cover the reasonable costs of administration and enforcement of the specific licensing regime and should be cost neutral over a period of three years.

9.2 A report was provided to the Licensing and Appeals Committee on 12 December 2013 summarising the legal position regarding fees; the Committee passed the following resolution:

RESOLVED: *That, having considered the criteria suggested within the report, the following principles for the setting of future licensing fees and charges be supported:*

- (a) *licensing fees and charges should be set having regard to the need to promote local economic growth provided that they are consistent with the following objectives:*
 - (i) *That the local Council Tax payers does not, unless provided for by law or decision of the Council, subsidise the operating costs associated with businesses or other trading entities (i.e. the Council seeks to fully recover the lawful costs licensing activity);*
 - (ii) *the Council may not fully recover its lawful costs associated with licensing activity if a) this would result in significant hardship to third parties, or b) the effect of fees or charges associated with licensing may encourage unlicensed activity and where formal enforcement is unlikely to be an effective control, or c) where the Council specifically wishes to encourage the growth a specific licensable activity;*
- (b) *an analysis of licensing costs, including detailed analysis of all recharges, should be undertaken every three years vis-à-vis licensing fees and charges;*
- (c) *in the years between cost reviews, fees and charges should ordinarily be subject to the Council's published inflationary increase;*
- (d) *any under/over recovery of full cost within existing licensing fees and charges should be rectified without undue delay, where legislation allows. However, where this may result in a significant increase in a licence fee/charge then consideration will be given to a phased introduction of the new levy;*
- (e) *that enforcement activities in respect of unlicensed businesses/individuals should continue with the associated costs being financed from the General Fund; and*
- (f) *that enforcement activities are periodically reviewed to ensure that they are delivered in the most cost-effective manner including, where appropriate, the use of other internal departments or external statutory bodies.*

9.3 This resolution has been fully implemented and a full costing exercise was undertaken before setting the fees in 2019.

9.4 With the agreement of the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, in accordance with (a) (ii) of the resolution, the fees for 2020/21 were held at 2019/20 levels during the Covid-19 restrictions due to the financial impact on businesses.

10. POLICY WORK

10.1 To ensure transparency for applicants, licence holders and the public, and to ensure consistent decision-making, each aspect of licensing has its own policy clearly stating the Council's requirements and local interpretation where legislation allows.

10.2 The Licensing and Appeals Committee is involved in the development and ongoing review of licensing policies as follows:

(a) Statutory policies under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005

These policies can only be adopted by Full Council however the Licensing and Appeals Committee are responsible for reviewing the results of the public consultations and recommending the policies to Full Council.

(b) Non- statutory policies

(i) Where policies are reserved for the Executive, Cabinet has the responsibility for the initial adoption of new policies

(ii) Where policies are not reserved for the Executive, initial adoption falls to the Licensing and Appeals Committee

(c) Review and amendment of existing policies

(i) Statutory policies are reserved for Full Council

(ii) Executive non-statutory policies can be amended by the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health

(iii) Non-statutory policies not reserved for the Executive can be amended by the Licensing and Appeal Committee, the Executive Member for Environmental Health or the Licensing Manager depending on the extent of the amendments. Each policy details the responsibilities of each of the potential decision makers.

10.3 In the reporting year, the following policies were considered:

(a) Animal Licensing

The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health amended the policy following a public consultation to reflect the new legislation and national standards.

(b) Taxi and Private Hire Licensing

The Licensing and Appeals Committee considered the results of a public consultation at its October 2020 meeting and adopted a new policy. The policy amendments cover a number of administrative changes, clarification of wording, consideration of appropriate wheelchair accessible vehicle provision, the Government's new national standards and environmental considerations.

(c) Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003

Following a public consultation, a revised policy was considered by the Licensing and Appeals Committee at its October 2020 meeting to recommend the adoption of the policy to Full Council in November.

11. PROJECT UPDATES

11.1 The licensing service has several ongoing projects targeted at smarter ways of working, channel shift, public engagement and income generation.

Public licensing register

11.2 The public register is now live and enables the public to view the following licence types:

- Adult gaming centres
- Animal activity licences
- Betting premises licences
- Club premises certificates
- Gaming permits
- Pavement licences
- Personal licences
- Premises licences under the Licensing Act 2003
- Scrap metal dealers
- Street trading permits

It is hoped in due course to extend this list to include taxi and private hire drivers, operators and vehicles plus charitable collections and small society lotteries.

11.3 The register also lists all applications subject to consultation and the public are now able to submit representations directly through the register portal.

11.4 The final stage of the public register project is to accept electronic submission of applications. It is hoped to have the electronic submission of licences 'live' by the end of the current civic year; this is a key development as it is likely that the current online facility provided by Government will be decommissioned in the future.

Customer self-service

11.5 To facilitate the introduction of a pre-application advice service and to improve our service provision to the public a review of the licensing pages on the Council's website was undertaken in 2019.

11.6 Animal licensing and licences under the Licensing Act 2003 were completed in 2019. Further work is ongoing to ensure our webpages for all aspects of licensing are more customer-focused to ease the transition to online applications and self-service.

11.7 Officers have also asked the pages to be reviewed by non-licensing staff within the Council to ensure that they are customer-friendly and explain the processes in plain English without unnecessary jargon.

Safeguarding for licensed drivers

- 11.8 At a previous meeting of the Licensing and Appeals Committee during a discussion on the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy, Members requested that safeguarding was given a higher profile in the licensing process.
- 11.9 In addition to all prospective drivers having to pass a verbal knowledge test that includes safeguarding scenario questions, all prospective drivers and drivers renewing their licence must undertake mandatory safeguarding training delivered in-house by licensing officers. This ensures that the course syllabus can remain 'live' and reflect relevant concerns and information and that drivers continually refresh their knowledge.

Safeguarding

- 11.10 Due to the importance of safeguarding and the ability for all licence holders across the full range of licensing to spot safeguarding concerns, as each licensing policy is reviewed new sections on safeguarding are being added.
- 11.11 It is the view of the Institute of Licensing that safeguarding should become a licensing objective for all licensing regimes and this is strongly supported by officers.

Licensing forums

- 11.12 The Animal Licensing Consultative Forum and the Taxi & Private Hire Consultative Forum remain key aspects of liaison between officers and licence holders. The Forums play a role in the ongoing review and development of policy.
- 11.13 The Responsible Authority Forum relating to the Licensing Act 2003 continues to be an effective way of sharing important intelligence and best practice, and benefits the trade and the public as the respective authorities can work together to resolve issues utilising appropriate specialisms and powers. This Forum has developed a much closer working relationship between officers and the responsible authorities resulting in more effective enforcement.

Channel shift

- 11.14 The licensing service have continued with the move away from paper correspondence with licence holders, most notably renewal reminders and information updates. The improved webpages now contain more information and each aspect of licensing will have a page where important updates are posted.
- 11.15 The preferred method of communication is now email and all licence holders are encouraged to supply an email address so they can receive important updates and other communication. The majority of licence holders have embraced this channel shift and find it more effective than hard copy mailshots.
- 11.16 The licensing service's move to a system whereby any caller to the Customer Service Centre (CSC) wishing to discuss licensing matters is either directed to the website or, where they have a more technical enquiry, they leave a brief explanation of their query for an officer to email a response has proved effective. With the full details of any enquiry received by email, officers can fully assess the question and provide a full response without a number of back and forth telephone calls clarifying matters.

- 11.17 Obviously, where necessary, telephone advice can still be given however this is ordinarily restricted to matters that cannot be resolved through the website or to ensure continuity of licence on renewal.

12. OTHER INFORMATION

- 12.1 During the reporting year, a taxi driver was involved in a road traffic accident and the licensing manager, having assessed all available information, revoked the driver's licence despite no prosecution by the police. Further details cannot be provided in a Part 1 report.
- 12.2 An appeal was heard by a District Judge in the magistrates' court and the Council's decision was upheld.

13. FUTURE PROPOSALS

- 13.1 The licensing service has several future developments planned that are targeted at increased channel shift, customer focus and income generation. It is important to be aware that some of these ideas are still at the developmental stage and that implementation will be dependent on available resourcing and practicalities.

Additional enforcement activity

- 13.2 Due to the increased number of complaints relating to taxi and private hire licensing, additional out-of-hours enforcement activity was planned however lockdown and the ongoing national restrictions prevented this. It is still intended to introduce this as soon as possible, possibly utilising officers from neighbouring authorities. The police are also keen to undertake joint enforcement operations using Special Constables. Any such activity would be intelligence led.

Income generation

- 13.3 Where permitted by licensing fee legislation and case law, the licensing service will be introducing charging for some discretionary services including, but not limited to:
- Pre-application advice for Licensing Act 2003 applications
 - Training for prospective taxi and private hire drivers
 - Training for new alcohol-licensed premises supervisors

Newsletters

- 13.4 To supplement the information page for licence holders on the hackney carriage and private hire web pages, all drivers were asked to opt-in to a licensing newsletter service. Feedback has been received that too many emails could result in important information being missed so this idea has been amended. Now licence holders receive emails for genuinely urgent information such as Covid-19 regulations updates with all other information being placed on a 'latest news' page on our website that licence holders can access at their leisure.
- 13.5 It is planned to extend this to other aspects of licensing such as Licensing Act 2003 and animal licensing.

Public engagement

- 13.6 As the public register now displays all licences and applications open to public consultation, social media will be utilised to inform the public of this new development.
- 13.7 Officers will also be considering other ways to engage with the public such as additional webpages for the public about how to make a representation, details of how to request a licence review, etc.
- 13.8 Officers are working on an information sheet for the public regarding the procedures at licensing hearings as feedback has been received that it is a confusing and daunting process when attending your first hearing.
- 13.9 Following the success of the taxi and private hire survey, officers are considering a survey to capture the public's thoughts on the licensing service and how it can be improved.

Channel shift

- 13.10 As part of the development of the website, officers are also reviewing where other improvements to the service can be made such as:
- An online booking system for booking DBS, compliance test, safeguarding course and knowledge test appointments
 - Further focus on online applications as applicants must already pay online
 - Online forms for reporting concerns that are designed to capture the information needed by officers rather than numerous telephone exchanges