

<u>HEADING</u>	National database of taxi licence refusals and revocations.
<u>Submitted by:</u>	Mrs Nesta Barker – Head of Environmental Health Services
<u>Portfolio:</u>	Finance & Resources
<u>Ward(s) affected:</u>	All

Purpose of the Report

To advise Committees of the development of a national database of hackney or private hire drivers or dual drivers licence refusals, suspensions and revocations.

Recommendations

That members note the development of national database of taxi driver licence refusals, suspensions and revocations.

and

That approval is given for participation in the national database.

Reasons

The new register will allow councils to record details of where a hackney or private hire drivers or dual drivers licence been refused, suspended or revoked and allow local authorities to check new applicants against the register.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The development of a national register is an important step to tackling the issue of individuals making applications to different licensing authorities following a refusal or revocation.
- 1.2 At the moment, if drivers do not disclose information about a previous revocation or refusal of a licence, there is often no way for the council to find this information out. This means that vital intelligence about an applicant's past behaviour could be missed and an individual might be able to get a new licence in another area, despite having their licence refused or revoked elsewhere.
- 1.3 The Local Government Association (LGA) has commissioned the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) to develop and host the register. NAFN is a shared service, hosted by Tameside council, which supports public authorities to tackle fraud and share intelligence. NAFN have been working with the LGA and a user group comprised of licensing officers from a number of local authorities to develop the register.
- 1.4 Licensing authorities will be responsible for adding basic details of drivers who have had applications for a licence either refused, revoked or suspended. The intention is that when a licensing authority receives an application for a licence, the applicant's details will be run through the register to confirm that there is no record of them having being revoked or refused elsewhere. Details contained on the register will be limited to information that will help to identify an individual to a certain degree of accuracy, but will not give a reason why actions were taken. It will be up to individual authorities to follow up on any searches which come back with a match.
- 1.5 The national register of revocations and refusals was commissioned by the LGA as a voluntary register intended to tackle an issue that undermines public safety and confidence and, however unfairly, harms the reputation of local government.

- 1.6 A Private Members Bill tabled by Daniel Zeichner MP aimed to build on the LGA's work, effectively putting a statutory duty on licensing authorities both to share information about licences they have revoked, refused or suspended on a register, and to check the register in respect of every new and renewal application. Unfortunately, this Bill was unsuccessful and fell during its second reading in Parliament on 2 February 2018.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The register is due to go live in April 2018.
- 2.2 Access to the register will be free for existing NAFN members. The council is not a member, so would need to join to participate in this initiative.
- 2.3 The LGA has confirmed that this cost would be a legitimate cost to be included in the Local Authority licensing fee.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 That members note the development of national database of taxi licence refusals, suspensions and revocations.
- 3.2 That approval is given for participation in the national register.

4. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 The national database will enable a full history for new drivers to be obtained for consideration of their application for a licence.
- 4.2 The national database will assist eliminating or reducing the issue of individuals making applications to different licensing authorities following a refusal or revocation.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 In line with the Council's objectives –
- Promoting a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 Participation in the national database is voluntary. There are currently no statutory requirements for the Local Authority to participate.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 No differential equality impacts have been identified.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 To participate, the Council would need to become a member of the NAFN at a cost of £1000 per annum, plus estimated costs of £200-400 per annum to undertake additional specific vehicle enquiries.
- 8.2 These costs can be included in fees and charges, the fees and charges for 2018/19 have already been set. These are however calculated on a rolling 3 year basis, so can be included in 2019/20 fees.
- 8.3 At current licence numbers, this would equate to between £1.15 and £1.35 per licence.
- 8.4 There would be additional staff resource in both checking the register for all new applications and uploading information for any refusals, revocations or suspensions undertaken. This would be met from existing resource.
- 8.5 There would also be additional staff resource in following up any matches on the database with individual authorities to determine the reasons why the individual is listed on the register. It is anticipated that this will be met from existing resources.
- 8.6 The intention is that the database will be retrospectively updated with all revocations and refusals for the past 7 years. There would be additional staff resource in both checking the driver records and uploading information for any refusals, revocations or suspensions undertaken, during this time period. The time or resource for undertaking this task has yet to be quantified or identified.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 There are no significant risks identified from participating in the register.
- 9.2 There are risks to the Authority, should the Council not participate in the register, and these would include:
 - a) Risk of issuing licences to drivers which have been refused or revoked at other Authorities without this knowledge.
 - b) Non-participation may increase driver applications to the Authority from those individuals that may be listed on the register.