

COMMITTEE	GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
DATE:	10 DECEMBER 2018
TITLE:	REVIEWING ARRANGEMENTS FOR MECHANICAL TESTS OF TAXI VEHICLES
PURPOSE:	APPROVE A NEW PROCEDURE OF TESTING VEHICLES OVER 10 YEARS OLD FROM APRIL 2019
AUTHOR:	HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is a requirement that every hackney and private hire vehicle has a standard MOT test annually. It is also a condition that every vehicle receives a mechanical test by the council prior to submitting an application for a vehicle licence. In addition, the vehicle must have a mechanical test (LA test) once a year whilst the vehicle is licensed. The vehicle licensing conditions also require two mechanical tests during the year once the vehicle reaches 10 years old. These tests are key to ensuring the safety of taxi vehicles.

- 1.1 These requirements are incorporated as licensing conditions and have been adopted in the Council's taxi vehicle licensing policy. Also, the requirements were based on the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Transport's good practice guidance.
- 1.2 Vehicle owners are responsible for paying and arranging mechanical tests themselves, and a copy of the inspection form is sent to the Licensing Unit once the test has been undertaken.
- 1.3 At a meeting of this Committee on 25 June 2012, members agreed to enable garages throughout Gwynedd to register an interest to conduct these tests for the taxi industry. Prior to this, there were three designated garages in the county (including the Council's garage in Dolgellau) authorised to undertake tests on taxi vehicles. Vehicle owners found it difficult to get inspection appointments for their vehicles with only three garages; therefore it was decided to ask eligible garages throughout the County to register an interest in offering the service.
- 1.4 By now 16 garages have been authorised to conduct the tests. The industry has welcomed the flexibility and the choice this has allowed.
- 1.5 Every authorised garage is qualified to undertake MOT tests and therefore operate in accordance with national statutory standards. The number of mechanical tests required over the next 12 months on vehicles are currently as follows -

Area	No. of mechanical tests currently required up to December 2019
Arfon	270
Dwyfor	91
Meirionnydd	63

2. REASONS FOR REVIEWING THE PROCEDURE

- 2.1 In 2012, this Committee approved the flexibility to allow some first time vehicle licence applications for vehicles older than the age noted in the policy. This step was taken in

response to the economic situation; based on the argument that it is the mechanical condition and the safety of the vehicle which is key to ensuring public safety; rather than the actual age of the vehicle itself.

2.2 Consequently, a continuous review of our vehicle testing arrangements is required to ensure that the vehicles receive the required checks; and that the standards of the test remain high, with consistency between garages.

2.3 Recently, there has been a small increase in the number of complaints received about the condition of vehicles; and officers on some occasions have used their enforcement powers during random inspections to refer vehicles to have an additional mechanical test due to specific concerns about the condition of the vehicle.

2.4 A number of Councils due to concerns over controlling the standard and consistency of mechanical tests, authorise council garages that serve the Authority's fleet of vehicles to undertake the mechanical tests on licensed vehicles.

It is reported that this is beneficial as it is possible to keep a tight control on the standards and it is also an opportunity to generate income for the Council.

3. DISCUSSIONS WITH THE COUNCIL'S GARAGES MANAGER

3.1 There are 3 garages under the Council's ownership that maintain the Council's fleet of vehicles across the County. The garage in Dolgellau already offers a mechanical test service for taxi vehicles, as there has not been much interest in the area from private garages.

3.2 Following an assessment of the workload and capacity of the Council's garages - the following has been proposed -

- That cars over 10 years old requiring two mechanical tests per annum are referred to the Council garages at Cibyn, Pwllheli and Dolgellau for the tests.
- That three other garages are authorised as 'reserve' garages during the periods when Council garages are too busy to undertake the tests.
- That a procedure is established to enable vehicle owners to be able to make arrangements and pay to have vehicle tests in Council garages via a self-service electronic form.
- That a discussion takes place with the Royal Mail's vehicle testing centre in Llandygái in order to try and find out if they would be interested in offering a taxi vehicle testing service.
- That Council garages continue to receive cars for testing occasionally that are randomly referred by the Licensing enforcement officer, in accordance with the inspection powers under section 68 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976; whatever the age of the vehicle.
- That it is intended that the arrangement will be operational from April 2019 if the Committee approve this.
- That vehicles under 10 years old continue to be tested in accordance with the current procedure.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee approve the arrangement recommended in 3.2 above.