



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>CONSULTATION – DVLA; FUTURE OF VEHICLE REGISTRATION AND LICENSING IN NORTHERN IRELAND</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> September 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Geoff Dickson, Policy & Performance Analyst

### Purpose

To bring to the attention of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, details of a consultation document from the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) on the future of vehicle registration and licensing in Northern Ireland.

To bring to Members attention an appraisal of the consultation document that was circulated by the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) who are operated by the DoE to undertake driver and vehicle licensing duties in Northern Ireland on behalf of the DVLA.

### Relevant Background Information

#### Summary of DVLA Consultation Document

The Council received a consultation document (Appendix 1) from the DVLA outlining proposed changes to the vehicle registration and licensing in Northern Ireland. In the consultation document, the DVLA state that

*“The proposal at the heart of this consultation is to modernise the way vehicle registration and licensing services are delivered in NI and put these on a par with services available to motorists in GB”.*

In effect, this means the DVA operations in Northern Ireland will close and the services will be transferred to the UK headquarters in Swansea. At present, the DVA have headquarters in Coleraine as well as 7 local offices, one of which is in Belfast.

The consultation document notes a total of 324 posts, the majority of which are based in Coleraine, will be affected; the DVA appraisal document states that 22 staff are employed in the Belfast office. The DVLA have acknowledged that the result of the changes will have significant staffing consequences, stating:

*“there will be significant impact on the staff that are currently employed in delivering vehicle registration and licensing services in NI.”*

The DVLA and DoE have been holding discussions about the opportunities for redeployment in the NI Civil Service, however:

*“due to the preponderance of potentially surplus staff in the Coleraine area, the vast majority of whom are in non-mobile grades or have restricted mobility due to working pattern, disability or welfare reasons, that identifying suitable redeployment opportunities may present a significant challenge”.*

The DVLA document states that if the proposals are adopted, the following service improvements would be offered to all NI motorists:

- Access to electronic vehicle licensing and declaring vehicles off the road, either online or via automated telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Increased range of transaction available at post office counters, including:
  - Licensing a vehicle when changes need to be made to the vehicle registration certificate, for example change of address
  - Relicensing a vehicle when the reminder form is not available
  - Change of taxation class when a vehicle is being relicensed (for example from 'disabled' to a duty paying class)
  - HGV relicensing
  - Issues of duplicate tax discs
- Introduction of a retention service for NI vehicle registration numbers (ie keeping a personalised registration number after selling the car)
- Telephone service for application for a duplicate vehicle registration document
- The transfer of personalised number plates between GB and NI vehicles will be simplified
- Purchase of NI and GB personalised number plates through a harmonised sales scheme
- The administration process of moving vehicle registration between GB and NI will be streamlined.

A number of benefits are also highlighted for NI businesses, see Appendix 1 for further details.

### **DVA Appraisal Document**

The DVA are opposed to the operation moving to Swansea and have written an appraisal of the DVLA consultation document, attached as Appendix 2. In the appraisal, the DVA state that:

- The closure of the DVA would remove £22m per annum from the NI economy
- Centralisation of services would mean lower standards of service and the removal of choice for customers
- DVA's exemplary record of delivering high standards of service would be lost to customers
- Alternative proposals have not been fully considered by the DVLA.

These issues are dealt with in more detail in Appendix 2.

### **Role of Belfast City Council in driver and vehicle licensing**

The council has no remit in terms of vehicle licensing; however the potential closure of the Belfast office may have some implications for the city.

### **Consultation Response**

The closing date for feedback to the consultation paper is 12<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Recommendations**

Councillors are asked to note the consultation document and appraisal by the DVA and either:

- Offer comments to be fed back to the DVLA in response to the proposed move of DVA services to Swansea or
- refer to party groups for party political responses.

### **Documents Attached**

**Appendix 1** – DVLA: Future of Vehicle Registration and Licensing in Northern Ireland consultation document

**Appendix 2** – Department of the Environment (DVA) appraisal of consultation document

## **Appendix 1**

### **DVLA: Future of Vehicle Registration and Licensing in Northern Ireland consultation document**



## **Appendix 2**

### **Department of the Environment (DVA) appraisal of consultation document**