

**LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE  
08 FEBRUARY 2010**

---

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM UNMET DEMAND SURVEY  
(Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection)**

**1 PURPOSE OF DECISION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on progress against recommendations made within the TPI report on the unmet demand survey received by the Committee at the October meeting.
- 1.2 At the last meeting of the Committee consideration was given to the TPI report. That report concluded that there was no unmet demand. Having heard this the Committee accepted an argument broadly along the lines that in order to protect the quality of what we had locally that a restriction should be introduced so that the trade and officers could work together on the detailed recommendations within that report. The objective being to see whether a continued restriction could be justified in the ongoing interests of the consumer taking due account of the more detailed consideration of those recommendations. The Committee were informed that the restriction could be lifted at any time provided it is within the 3 years of the original survey.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. **That the Committee**
- (i) **notes the progress made**
  - (ii) **request officers to bring a further report to the next meeting and**
  - (iii) **continues with the restriction on the issue of Hackney Carriage licences whilst issues arising from the TPI recommendations are being actively pursued**

**3 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

- 3.1 The Borough Solicitor is satisfied that the relevant legal provisions are contained within the body of the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 3.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 3.3 Recommendations from within the TPI report may, if implemented, impact upon equalities and present policy. At this time exploratory work is being carried out and therefore no equalities impact has been identified.

## Strategic Risk Management Issues

3.4 No strategic risks have been identified at this time.

### **4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

4.1. The recommendations contained within the TPI report are listed below with a comment from officers on progress made to date. Whilst some progress has been made it is still too early to say if real improvements can be agreed and implemented. Officers are of the view that a further period of consultation and work with the BLTF on a number of areas will be required before any conclusive progress can be reported.

#### **Recommendation 1:**

**It is recommended that if any change to the current licensing policy is proposed this should be reviewed in the light of any new DfT guidance to licensing authorities, expected to be published towards the end of 2009.**

#### Comment

There has not been any guidance issued by the DfT on Taxi Licensing since the Committee meeting in October. The Local Authority Coordinators on Regulatory Services (LACORS) have announced that they will have a new responsibility for Taxi and Private Hire activities. LACORS presently coordinates a range of Regulatory services such as Trading Standards and Environmental Health and release guidance and best practice for Local Authorities within those work activities. It is anticipated that LACORS will influence the content of the new taxi guidance and this may be part of the reason for the delay in release of the DfT guidance.

#### **Recommendation 2:**

**It is recommended that opportunities to provide new ranks at the Angels Nightclub and in Sandhurst and improvements to facilities at existing ranks (improved information or contact numbers to use if there is no Hackney present, shelter for passengers and improved access for wheelchair users) as highlighted by the rank audit (see 3.40) are explored.**

#### Comment

It is felt by officers and the trade that a rank at Angels Nightclub and further ranks within the Sandhurst area are not required at this time. Improvements to facilities at other ranks will be consulted upon with the trade, and works will be dependent upon available funding and need.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

**It is recommended that efforts should be made to encourage operators and drivers to address areas of potential latent demand by operating at peak times, serving more of the existing ranks, serving areas outside of Bracknell town centre and being more responsive to the demands of wheelchair users.**

#### Comment

This recommendation links with other recommendations particularly **4(i), 5 and 6**. Officers have consulted with trade representatives with respect to training needs and options. Officers favour a training programme that covers disability awareness and the physical elements of safe transportation, whilst the BLTF are of the view that only training in the physical loading and unloading of passengers is required to improve

driver confidence and passenger satisfaction. These discussions are ongoing and costings of training are being investigated. A mystery shopper exercise using disabled persons is being conducted by TPI and we are awaiting the results and comments of the person involved which will inform further discussions.

**Recommendation 4:**

**To address service accessibility, service quality and standards of customer care issues identified, consideration should be given to:**

***in the short term:***

- 4(i) Encouraging drivers to seek training in understanding the market opportunities offered by disabled people, passenger handling, disability awareness, customer care, knowledge and where appropriate language skills.**
- 4(ii) providing information on the difference between Hackneys and PHVs and promoting the use of legitimate vehicles.**
- 4(iii) ongoing monitoring of the outcomes of the above through customer surveys and random use of mystery passengers.**

***in the longer term:***

- 4(iv) consideration of a more comprehensive quality taxi partnership (QTP) approach to increase liaison between licensing authority, police, other stakeholders and operators, provide a framework for bringing about mutually beneficial improvements across the taxi sector and a quality mark to participating operators, as has been found to be effective in other authorities.**
- 4(v) the framework provided by a QTP could also be useful for facilitating discussion on how best to optimise supply to address peaks in demand, delays, congestion issues at ranks, environmental issues, markets available and the formation of standard frameworks for taxi commissioning, etc.**

**Comment**

- 4(ii) Information cards are presently being drawn up for distribution to users of taxi services. A common practice in many local authorities is to have a condition of the licence requiring notices on the doors of private hire vehicles which have wording similar to "Private Hire Vehicle. No booking, no ride".**

Members may wish to consider if this is a condition that they would consider being added to private hire vehicle licences and request officers to consult with the trade and bring back a report and recommendation to the Committee.

- 4(iii) and 10 The use of surveys and mystery passengers will be considered dependent upon implementation of other recommendations.**

- 4(iv)(v) An approach has been made to the Berkshire Licensing Forum which consists of all Licensing Authorities within Berkshire to see if there would be any interest in a joint Quality Taxi Partnership. Such an arrangement should provide a more effective and efficient partnership.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The licensing authority should encourage operators and drivers to promote their services on a collective basis.**

Comment

Please note comment under Recommendations 3 and 8.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The licensing authority should seek to collate information in which operators and drivers operate wheelchair accessible vehicle/s, using drivers trained in the care of disabled people and are responsive to their needs and publish this as part of a guide to accessible taxis.**

Comment

Please note comment under Recommendation 3.

#### **Recommendation 7:**

**The licensing authority should consider how it might assist those put off using taxis by the cost, perhaps by improving opportunities for taxi sharing or encouraging users to negotiate over the fare proposed.**

Comment

Please note the comment made under recommendation 8 which particularly relates to journeys from the rail station to the Southern industrial estate for employees and visitors to businesses in that area.

#### **Recommendation 8:**

**The licensing authority should consider the request of Hackney operators and drivers for access to bus gates, especially the Great Hollands bus gate.**

Comment

Officers have spoken to colleagues within Transport Development to discuss opportunities for, and factors against, the opening of bus gates to Taxis. The discussions are in an early stage and no real progress can be reported at this time. With regard to the bus gate across the A322 from Coopers Hill to Wildridings which has been identified as a priority by the taxi trade it has been suggested by the trade that a trial period be permitted to judge impact upon other road users. Officers from the Transportation section have considered this using existing data and a model to estimate impact and have said it would adversely affect traffic flow through that corridor and they would therefore not recommend a trial period or full opening of the gate to taxis. It has been suggested to the trade and agreed by transportation officers that if the trade worked together to provide a Taxi bus service, which operates in a similar way to a normal bus service, use of this bus gate this would have a reduced impact on traffic flow and still deliver the anticipated benefits for customers, quicker journey times and reduced costs. The BLTF have stated that it would not be in the overall interests of their members to operate a Taxi Bus service.

## **Recommendation: 9**

### **Future transport strategies and policy documents should take account of this report.**

#### Comment

A Transport Strategy for 2011 onwards is presently being worked and consulted upon. Officers have ensured that the Taxi trade will be fully involved in the process.

## **Recommendation 10**

### **Extra charges by Broadmoor.**

#### Comment

Please see comment under Recommendation 4.

- 4.2 Attached to the report as Annex 1 is a letter from the BLTF dated 13 January 2010 setting out their views upon the TPI recommendations and the retention of the Taxi Limitation Policy.

#### Background Papers

- 1 TPI Taxi Unmet Demand Survey August 2009
- 2 Unmet Demand Survey – Licensing and Safety Committee 1 October 2009.

#### Contact for further information

Robert Sexton, Head of Trading Standards and Licensing, 01344-352000

[Robert.sexon@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Robert.sexon@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

#### Doc Ref

G:\SECS1\LICENSING & SAFETY COMMITTEE\2010\January\Recommendations from Unmet Survey 04-02-10.doc