

**LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**29 APRIL 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 made in respect of the recommendations within the TPI unmet demand survey report as received by the committee in October 2009.
- 1.2 There is currently a restriction in place to limit the number of hackney carriage licences. The trade and officers have been working together on the recommendations within the TPI report, with the aim of investigating whether a continued restriction can be justified in the interest of consumers, having due account of the recommendations that were made.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1. That the Committee:**

- (i) notes the progress made**
- (ii) continues with the restriction to limit the number of hackney carriage licences whilst work is carried out in respect of the TPI recommendations**
- (iii) requests that officers bring a further report to the next meeting.**

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

Borough Solicitor

- 3.1 The legal implications are identified within the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 3.2 There are no significant financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 3.3 Recommendations from the TPI report may have an impact on 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 within the TPI report are listed below with a comment from officers on progress made to date.

### 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

The DfT Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance was republished on 2 March 2010. There has been no change to the Guidance in respect of their advice on quantity restriction of hackney carriage licences, which the DfT do not regard as best practice.

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

### 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

Angels Nightclub is currently closed, and it is felt by officers and the trade that further ranks within the Sandhurst area are not required at this time. Improvements to facilities at other ranks can be discussed as required with the trade, though this will be dependent upon available funding.

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

### 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

It appears to officers that the trade do operate to capacity on the main ranks at peak times. The view of the trade is that there are a number of existing ranks that it would not be financially viable for them to use, such as the ranks outside of Bracknell town centre. Officers recently suggested that the BLTF may wish to approach the Meadows Shopping Centre, as they became aware that there was a contract available for a taxi provision from the centre, but this option was not taken up by the BLTF. The issue of being more responsive to the demands of wheelchair users is addressed within the comment on Recommendation 4(i).

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

#### **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(i) Officers have consulted with the BLTF in respect of training needs and options. Officers favour a training programme that covers both 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. Discussions are ongoing with Corporate Training to investigate whether an in-house training programme, in conjunction with the Integrated Transport Unit, can be provided.
- 4(ii) The draft text for information cards has been drawn up and sent to the Graphic Design unit for proofs to be created. These cards will be distributed to users of taxis and private hire vehicles.  
  
There will also be a consultation with private hire operators and vehicle owners in respect of placing notices on the doors of private hire vehicles stating something to the effect "No booking = No ride".
- 4(iii) TPI have been unable to provide full results from the mystery shopper exercise and therefore this process will be re-started to ensure validity of the data to be collected.

- 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. At present, not all authorities are in a position to consider this arrangement due to the costs involved.

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

#### **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.

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

#### **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

Letters were sent to all private hire operators and hackney carriage vehicle owners in early February 2010, seeking a response from all those interested in being included in the guide. At the date of the last meeting with the BLTF, just five (5) responses had been received. It is not felt that this number is sufficient to create a guide at present. More responses are expected shortly.

#### **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.

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

#### **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 the opening of bus gates to taxis. 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 Transport Development team have considered this using a model to estimate impact and would not recommend any opening of the gate to taxis due to the adverse impact on traffic flow. It has been suggested to the trade that if they 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.

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

**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 asked that the taxi trade be fully involved in the process. It is noted from the new DfT guidance that they expect justification for any policy of quantity restrictions to be included in the Local Transport Plan process.

There is no further action planned at this time in respect of this recommendation.

- 4.2 A meeting was recently held with two members of the Committee to discuss the above recommendations.
- 4.3 Progress has been made in respect of work with the trade on the recommendations, but some items are likely to be ongoing for some time, such as the issue of driver training. Progress has also been hampered by the lack of results of the mystery shopper exercise run by TPI, and the lack of responses from the taxi trade expressing an interest in being included within a guide to accessible taxis.

Background Papers

TPI Unmet Demand Taxi Survey August 2009  
Minutes of meetings with Bracknell Licensed Taxi Forum

Contact for further information

Laura Driscoll - 01344 352517  
laura.driscoll@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Doc Ref

G:\TSTANDRD\Laura\Committee\2010\201004\Recommendations from Unmet Demand Survey.doc