

To: **LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**
24 JUNE 2020

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE TRADE MEETING UPDATE
(Public Protection Manager)

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To summarise the work of the Taxi Trade Group set up by the Public Protection Partnership to advise on a way forward for issues raised by the trade.

2 Recommendations

That the Committee:

- i) **notes the content of the report and;**
- ii) **makes any recommendations on matters discussed or for further discussion in the future of the Group.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Licensing and Safety Committee asked that officer/trade meetings be set up to discuss issues of concern following representation of such from the trade with a further wish to receive feedback from the meetings.
- 3.2 Recent issues reported to the department indicate a need for an increase in dialogue with the trade during the uncertain times of COVID 19.
- 3.3 Request by the trade to discuss a fare increase, mixed hackney carriage fleet, age of vehicle inspection process alteration and subsidy to licence fees.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 None - the meetings are seen as a good opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with the trade in an attempt to reach agreement on a wide number manner of topics affecting them.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 Since the Licensing and Safety Committee meeting in December 2021 two meetings of the Taxi Trade Meeting have been held. The first meeting took place on the 14 April 2021 and the second was a workshop attended by nominated representatives of the trade which was held on the 09 June 2021.
- 5.2 The Taxi Trade Meetings have been set up to provide a forum to meet with and consider comments from representatives of the taxi trade and seek advice from Licensing Officers on a range of issues that affect existing and proposed licences, policies, tariffs and fees and other matters of common interest.
- 5.3 The meetings are very well attended. At the April 2021 meeting there were 20 members of the trade in attendance alongside the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee and Officers.

- 5.4 The meetings have been used as an opportunity for the trade to discuss the impact that Covid has had on their businesses as well as raise other areas of concern. The trade was provided with information about accessing funding through the Council's Covid Grant systems. The trade were informed at the June meeting that the authority had paid out grants to just over 200 members of the trade. The trade expressed their gratitude for the support that they had received.

Concerns raised and the progress that has been made are set out in the table below:

Issue	Comments
<p>Mixed Fleet – The trade needs to write up a report/business case that can be put forward to committee with their reasons and proposal to allow for a mixed fleet of vehicles</p>	<p>Business case awaited from the trade.</p>
<p>Age of Vehicle Fee Licensing to do a report to committee to see if the age of vehicle can be extended to 11 years instead of 10 for a hackney carriage. Again a business case should be provided from the trade</p>	<p>Item included on June 2021 L&S agenda for discussion</p>
<p>Rats on Taxi Rank at British Legion</p>	<p>Environment Health had visited the site. Following further discussions it was agreed that EH would attend again at the time the market was closing to see if there were any issues arising from the way waste was being disposed of. Officers were also looking into longer term solutions with colleagues in the Waste Team</p>
<p>Taxi Rank McDonalds</p>	<p>Highways Officers had revisited the request and concluded that it was not feasible to add a taxi rank into this area. There would only be room for a single vehicle to wait in front of the gates which would then need to do a 180 degree turn in the access road across the pedestrian route. There was little room for other vehicles to queue behind without obstructing the route for other users. Drivers on the High Street would not be able to see if the rank was clear and so would have to enter and either wait or perform a three point turn and leave if the space was in use.</p> <p>This request would therefore not be progressed.</p>
<p>Taxi Tariffs</p>	<p>Proposals had been drafted by the trade and worked through at the June workshop and a report was included on the June 2021 L&S agenda</p>

Illegal Parking on Ranks	<p>Signage was about to be erected on the Waitrose and Station Ranks advising that only Bracknell licensed HC were permitted to park on the ranks.</p> <p>Two Licensing Liaison Officers had been employed on the 01 June and they would be visiting the ranks to assist with moving illegally parked cars along and if appropriate drafting reports so that enforcement action could be taken.</p>
Uber	<p>Legal advice had been sought on what action could be taken with regard to Uber drivers in the area. Provided that they were not breaking the law they were permitted to operate in Bracknell.</p> <p>However if any illegal activity was undertaken enforcement action could be taken against them.</p> <p>The trade were urged to campaign to encourage customers to make use of local companies.</p>
Unlicensed Vehicles Operating in the Area	<p>Two Licensing Liaison Officers had been employed on the 01 June and they would be assisting the trade with reporting incidents.</p> <p>Where information was gathered about illegal activity the PPP would investigate and where appropriate take enforcement action or report drivers to their licensing authorities</p>
Station Rank Kerb	<p>This had now been mended and the trade had expressed their gratitude for this work being completed.</p>
No parking spaces for PH Vehicles in the town	<p>Colleagues in the Highways Team had identified a potential area for the trade to use and final details were being worked up and would then be communicated to the trade.</p>

5.5 The trade raised a number of concerns about the licensing fees at these meetings. These included queries as to how they were calculated. It was noted that the Council's fee setting process would mean that the proposed fees for 2022/23 would be presented to the Joint Public Protection Committee on the 13 September 2021 and the 21 October 2021 Licensing and Safety Committee meeting. They would then be subject to a statutory consultation period and would be discussed at the 04 October 2021 Taxi Trade Meeting.

5.6 It was noted that the fees were based on a full cost recovery model. What this meant was that an hourly rate based on a range of costs was calculated. Officers then calculated how long it took to process each of the elements and activities set out in

the fees. Each fee then comprised the hourly rate multiplied by the time taken to do the work.

- 5.7 The Public Protection Partnership was in the process of implementing a new IT system. The system would allow for applications and payments to be made online. Applicants would also be able to track the progress of their applications using this system. The system would also be able to assist with the renewal process and would generate documents automatically. It was envisaged that this automation would reduce the time taken to process applications which should then result in a commensurate reduction in the fees.
- 5.8 The other issue that had irked drivers was the additional costs that they had to pay in addition to their licence fees. Officers were being trained in order to deliver some of the training, which was previously outsourced and therefore had to be charged for, themselves. It was therefore likely that some of the additional payments would fall away and that the training costs would be included in the licence fees. The exception to this was DBS checks albeit that these were being moved to a national online system too which should help to reduce costs. The trade asked at the June meeting if the frequency of the training refreshers could be revisited and it was agreed that this would be looked at as part of the October meeting agenda.
- 5.9 The Chairman thanked the trade for attending the meetings. Special thanks was given to Manoj Lacximicant for all his assistance and information gathering and for putting the business case together in respect of the tariffs. Thanks was also given to the Officers who had worked hard to resolve the concerns raised by the trade. He commented that he hoped that these initiatives showed that the Council was listening to the trades' concerns and was responding to them.

Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 None

Financial Advice

- 6.2 None

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 Not applicable

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Not applicable

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Not applicable

Climate Change Implications

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE (COMMERCIAL)/OFFICIAL SENSITIVE (PERSONAL)

Contact for further information

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