

To: **LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**
03 FEBRUARY 2022

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 since the last Licensing and Safety Committee, inform Members about any matters raised and where appropriate agree a way forward on queries raised at the meeting.

2 Recommendations

That the Committee:

- i) **NOTES** the content of the report and;
- ii) **NOTES** the positive ongoing dialogue between the trade and the Council.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Group has been set up to provide an opportunity for the Taxi Trade, Members and Officers to meet to discuss a range of topics of common interest, to provide a forum to resolve issues and foster closer working relationships, to undertake informal consultation and then report back to the Licensing and Safety Committee with any recommendations for alterations to the existing or proposed licences, policies, tariffs and fees etc.

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 on the 21 October 2021 one meeting of this group has been held. This virtual meeting was held on the 24 January 2022 and was once again well attended by the trade with eight representatives present. Any other trade representatives wishing to attend the meetings are asked to notify moira.fraser@westberks.gov.uk and they would be sent the attendance details. Discussions are ongoing with the trade as to whether they would prefer future meetings to be face to face or if they should continue to be held remotely.
- 5.2 It is the intention that going forward we will hold two scheduled meetings a year. One in January to discuss, amongst other things, the outcome of the annual fees and charges consultation and to hold initial discussions about any changes to the tariff scheme to be consulted on and if appropriate implemented later during that year. The second meeting, which will usually be held in October would include a discussion on the fees and charges pertaining to the trade before the formal consultation process is started and to provide feedback on the tariff consultation. Ad hoc meetings can be arranged to discuss any matters of concern or interest during the year. The Chairman requested at the meeting that an additional meeting be set up in May or June this year to discuss the draft Taxi Policy.

- 5.3 As had previously been agreed the primary focus of the January 2022 meeting was to hold a discussion with the trade as to whether or not they would like to make any proposals relating to varying the tariffs in 2022. The other main agenda item was to report back on the consultation on charges for operators and vehicle licence fees. The trade had also requested that a discussion on the policies relating to the age of vehicles and frequency of training be discussed.

Taxi Tariffs 2022

- 5.4 It was noted that in 2021 the tariffs had been increased for the first time since 2011. It was agreed that an annual discussion would take place with the trade about the tariffs and that the outcome of that discussion would be conveyed to the Licensing and Safety Committee.
- 5.5 The Trade commented that there was an appetite to vary the fees. They suggested that it would be appropriate to propose an increase that reflected the January 2022 Consumer Price Index. The Chairman asked that the trade put together a proposal, backed up by a business case that could then be presented to Members of the Licensing and Safety Committee at the 23 June 2022 meeting. The Committee would then determine if the proposal should be put forward for consultation.

Outcome of the Consultation on Charges for Operators and Vehicle Licence Fees

- 5.7 The Group were informed about the outcome of the consultation which is set out in a separate report on this agenda. It should be noted that the consultation pertained to a specific set of fees. Some of the issues raised by the trade fell outside of that consultations and they had been redirected to submit comments to the Executive consultation.
- 5.8 The trade commented that they understood that this consultation related to separate matters but they still had concerns about the cost of DBS Checks and the Vehicle Extension Fees.
- 5.9 Officers explained that the £94 fee comprised the £64 that the PPP was charged for the checks by HR and then £30 for half hour processing. She reminded the trade that online update service was available now and had been in place for some time. It would become a mandatory requirement as part of the new taxi/private hire policy and cost £13. Officers were continuing to look into ways the cost of the DBS check could be reduced and if any could be identified these savings would be passed on to the trade.
- 5.9 In terms of the Vehicle Extension Fees the processes behind the fees which were explained at the October Licensing and Safety Committee were explained to the trade again. Members had accepted that the work undertaken to action these applications took an hour and had therefore supported the £59 fee.

Policies Relating to the Age of Vehicles and Frequency of Training Courses

- 5.10 Officers explained that these issues would be picked up as part of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy.
- 5.11 Other 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>Delayed to the October 2022 meeting at the request of the trade.</p>
<p>Taxi Rank – British Legion Officers to contact Highways Colleagues about the removal of the feeder rank.</p>	<p>As a formal complaint had been submitted to Bracknell Forest Council about the removal of the rank this item was not discussed at the meeting pending the outcome of the complaints process.</p>
<p>Campaign for Bracknell Forest Taxi Trade Officers to work with trade re proposed wording for campaign to match sourced graphics</p>	<p>Input from trade awaited</p>
<p>Illegal Parking on Ranks</p>	<p>Officers explained that Enforcement Officers had visited the Waitrose Rank 241 times since the 01 July 2021. Eighteen penalty charges had been issued of which fourteen had been paid. Officers explained that the team were currently in the process of amending their processes and procedures to be able to allow them to issue penalty notices via the post using their hand held devices.</p>
<p>DBS checks being done in Theale</p>	<p>Whilst Time Square was not open to the public face to face checks could still be undertaken in Theale. Drivers to arrange appointments for checks to be done in Time Square where this was their preference.</p>
<p>Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy</p>	<p>The external solicitor drafting the document has uncovered some technical issues which need to be resolved before the draft policy can be considered. It will therefore be brought to the June 2022 Licensing and Safety Committee meeting and will then be subjected to a consultation exercise.</p>
<p>Uber</p>	<p>The trade continued to voice concerns about the impact Uber was having on their business. Officers had confirmed that Uber were licensed to operate in Bracknell and enforcement action could only be taken where Uber drivers were breaking the law for example where they were plying for hire or parking illegally.</p>

Use of Reading Bus Lanes	It was agreed that the Chairman would write to relevant elected members and the Chief Executive of Reading Borough Council to see if the Bracknell Trade could be permitted to make use of these lanes.
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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

Contact for further information

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