

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Licensing Committee held on Friday, 6 October 2017 at 11.00 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillors Lee Mason (Chair)
Hannah Hockaday (Vice-Chair)
Dave Ashmore
Paul Godier
Steve Hastings
David Tompkins
Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Hugh Mason (Standing Deputy)

15. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Scott Harris, Ian Lyon, David Fuller, Stephen Morgan MP and Leo Madden. Councillor Hugh Mason was the Standing Deputy for Councillor Fuller)

16. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no pecuniary interests. Councillor Lee Mason declared that he had used Viv Young's garage but this was not a clear interest.

17. Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 23 June 2017 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 23 June 2017 be approved as a correct record, to be signed by the Chair.

18. Survey for unmet demand for Hackney Carriage Vehicles (AI 4)

Nickii Humphreys, Licensing Manager, introduced her report, with the appended report by Vector Transport Consultancy, and the recommendations set out the range of options available at the discretion of the committee. Her report also put the study in the context of national guidance for local authorities to regularly review any unmet demand.

Mr Iain MacDonald, as author of the Vector report, presented the scope of the report and its findings. He reported that the survey had been undertaken at a time of high demand (being the Halloween weekend and payday) and the trade had coped relatively well with this. There had been little evidence of queuing of passengers, with the exception of Albert Road, where there had been problems with unauthorised parking in the taxi ranks. A high level of service had been witnessed and wheelchair accessibility had not been found to be a problem. The conclusion was that there was no significant unmet demand in Portsmouth, so there was not the need to issue further plates. There was however a need to tackle the problem of parked vehicles in the Albert Road taxi ranks.

Deputations were then heard by taxi trade representatives:

- i) Mr Viv Young - spoke to represent many taxi drivers and he supported the survey's findings that the trade was already meeting the demand, as evidenced on the Halloween weekend, and the statement that a value of less than 80 was a good indicator, whereas in Portsmouth the calculated Incidence of Significant Unmet Taxi Demand (ISUD) level was only 1.9. He therefore supported Option 1 to maintain the current level of hackney carriage vehicles. He endorsed the measures to promote good language and communication skills by drivers. Mr Young was concerned by private cars parking in taxi ranks; this problem had been brought to the attention of the Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation. The study had not identified problems with wheelchair access to vehicles. There had been very low levels of waiting times for passengers across the city (At Cosham it peaked at 3 people in an hour). There had been no fare increases and drivers earned below the minimum wage but provided a high quality service (passing strict tests) competing against out of city operators.
- ii) Mr Chris Dixon firstly continued Mr Young's representation - 99% of the trade were giving a sterling service to the public at affordable rates, so the findings of the study commissioned by the council should be supported and Option 1 should be approved by the committee. Mr Dixon also supported the survey and thanked Mr MacDonald for this piece of work and he hoped that the members would support its recommendations.

Members of the committee then raised the following issues:

The Chair welcomed the very comprehensive report, which had been undertaken at a busy time, and which clearly concluded that there was not an unmet demand. With changes in technology leading to more competition it would be unfair to extend the number of badges at the present time as it would adversely affect the livelihood of drivers, so the level should be kept the same for the next 3 years.

Councillor Vernon-Jackson agreed that there was no need to increase plate numbers as drivers were already struggling financially. He asked that there be future consideration of

- i) changing regulations in Albert Road to enforce against illegal parking in taxi ranks
- ii) Different standards between local authorities, even within Hampshire, which could be addressed at LGA level
- iii) Review the numbers of ranks, such as at Palmerston Road, and a request for a new rank at the Tesco in Fratton.

Members of the committee were supportive of the report which evidenced no unmet demand in the city and the need to support drivers in maintaining their income without extra competition, and the need to maintain the high standard for the trade in Portsmouth. The Chair thanked everyone for their comments and for the work undertaken to bring forward the survey.

The Licensing Manager reported that following on from this update on the existing provision a future report would be brought to committee to review hackney carriage ranks. There would first be a meeting of the revived consultative group to ask the trade representatives where they think the need is, to which committee members would be invited.

Discussions were also taking place with colleagues in the Transport section regarding parking problems at Albert Road and the need to educate the public and to see if the signage was sufficient. Committee members requested that a report also be brought back on this issue of enforcement at Albert Road.

A further future report on extending disabled access cars maximum age to tie in with the inventory of disabled access vehicles was also requested.

RESOLVED:

(1) The report was received and noted;

(2) The Licensing Committee noted the report conclusions that "there is no significant unmet demand" for the services of hackney carriages within the City of Portsmouth;

(3) That, as a consequence of (2) above, the Licensing Committee determined the number of hackney carriages licensed to ply for hire within the city (currently 234 vehicles) as follows:

- **To maintain the current limit of 234 licensed hackney carriages (Option 1)**

(4) That the Director of Culture & City Development be authorised to amend such policy directives, conditions of licence and application procedures commensurate with any formal resolutions of the committee.

19. Prosecutions, Appeals and Enforcement Action Update - Licensing Matters (AI 5)

Nickii Humphreys, Licensing Manager, presented this report which updated members of the enforcement and prosecutions work undertaken by officers on behalf of the committee. This covered cases taken to court as but did not take into account lower level warnings and penalty points on licences.

Questions were asked, including Councillor Godier raising what literature is used to inform the public regarding the rules on which taxis can be flagged down (which could be confusion especially with the arrival of Uber cars). The Licensing Manager reported that the PCC website gave the distinctions and there are exterior and interior livery stickers on vehicles to say "pre-book only". It was acknowledged that this was not usually a problem during the daytime but there was more confusion late at night, especially when out of town cars did not have the same standards. It was suggested that further work take place with licensed premises on this and regarding the signage at the taxi ranks and nightclubs. Officers were liaising with their

colleagues in the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Licensing Officers Group, and members could raise concerns through the Hants and Isle of Wight LGA.

The Licensing Manager reported that in future it was intended that this be an annual update to members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am.