
Update Following Discussions at the Taxi and Private Hire West Berkshire Council Liaison Group

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	31 January 2022
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Hilary Cole
Report Author:	Moirra Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	Not applicable

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update and raise any issues emanating from the most recent Liaison Group meeting.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Licensing Committee notes the content of the report.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Any follow up actions will be met from within existing resources.
Human Resource:	Attendance at these taxi trade meetings and any follow up actions will be met from within existing resources.
Legal:	There are no legal implications associated with these meetings. The trade meetings are not a legal requirement but are seen as good practice and allow a meaningful dialogue with the trade in an attempt to reach agreement on a wide number manner of topics affecting them.

Implication	Commentary			
Risk Management:	There are no risk management issues associated with this report. A good working relationship with the trade can assist with minimising reputational harm to the Council.			
Property:	None			
Policy:	The trade meetings are an opportunity to discuss policy issues but it is not a decision making forum. Any policy changes would be taken to the Licensing Committee, Joint Public Protection Partnership Committee or Council in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		The forum is a platform to discuss any policy changes. Equalities Impact Assessments would be undertaken where changes to policies and or procedures were proposed.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		The trade meetings are not a decision making forum.
Environmental Impact:		✓		The trade meetings are not a decision making forum.

Implication	Commentary			
Health Impact:		✓		The trade meetings are an opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest and an opportunity for the trade to raise matters directly with the decision makers. It is therefore hoped that they would have a positive outcome for the wellbeing of members of the trade and ultimately of the residents that use their services.
ICT Impact:		✓		There is no ICT impact albeit that some of the meetings will be conducted via Zoom.
Digital Services Impact:		✓		None
Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			The provision of a viable taxi trade in the district will support a number of the priorities in the Council Strategy. These meetings in particular are associated with supporting businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire.
Core Business:		✓		Providing support to the taxi trade forms part of the business as usual for the Public Protection Partnership.
Data Impact:		✓		The report does not have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.
Consultation and Engagement:	All Members of the West Berkshire Taxi Trade are invited to attend these meetings. While only a few have opted to attend the notes from the meetings are circulated to all members of the trade. The meeting is also attended by Members of the Licensing Committee.			

4 Supporting Information

Background

- 4.1 Since the November 2021 Licensing Committee meeting one meeting of the Taxi Trade Liaison Group has been held. The meeting took place on the 17 January 2022.

- 4.2 The Taxi and Private Hire West Berkshire Council Liaison Group (TTLG) has 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.
- 4.3 The meeting is attended by Members of the Licensing Committee, representatives of the hackney carriage and private hire trade and relevant Officers and is chaired by the Licensing Committee Chairman. The attendees are being canvassed to assess if they would prefer the October 2022 meeting to be conducted in person or via Zoom depending on any restrictions that are in place at the time.
- 4.4 It has been agreed that 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. Tariff scheme proposed variations would then need to be consulted on and if appropriate implemented during that year.
- 4.5 The second meeting, which will usually be held in October would include a discussion on the fees and charges pertaining to the trade for the forthcoming financial year before the formal consultation process is started. This meeting will also receive any feedback on tariff consultations should one be undertaken. Ad hoc meetings can be arranged to discuss any matters of concern or interest during the year.
- 4.6 The 17 January 2022 meeting was attended by Councillors Rick Jones, Phil Barnett, David Marsh, Adrian Abbs, Clive Hooker and Graham Bridgman and the trade were represented by Matt Castle, Graham Cox, Dawn Palmer, Peter Chemaly and Richard Brown. It was noted that Councillor Claire Rowles had stood down as a member of the Licensing Committee and she would therefore no longer be attending these meetings. The Group believe that it would be of great benefit if more trade attendees were able to come along to the meetings. Any other trade representatives wishing to attend the meetings are asked to notify moira.fraser@westberks.gov.uk and they will be sent the attendance details.

Consultation in Respect of the Private Hire Operator, and Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licence Fees

- 4.7 Officers explained that the consultation had run from the 18 November 2021 to the 16 December 2021. A public notice had been placed in both the Reading Chronicle and the Newbury Weekly News. A consultation document had also been posted on both the Public Protection Partnership and West Berkshire Council websites. A copy of the consultation document had also been sent to the Community Panel.
- 4.8 Two responses were received, both from members of the public and both of these related to reducing or removing vehicle fees for electric or low emission vehicles. More information is contained in another report being considered at this meeting.
- 4.9 The trade commented that they had concerns about the cost and range of electric vehicles on the market, the range that these vehicles could travel and the location, access to and speed of charging points. They noted the capabilities of fast charging points but did have concerns about the impact regular use would have on the life of car batteries. While they were supportive of the principles they had concerns about the

practical implications of using these vehicles. They would continue to work with officers to see what could be done to further the Council's Environmental Policies.

- 4.10 No further comments were received on the fees. The Chairman explained that a report was going to the Licensing Committee on the 31 January 2022. The Committee would then make a recommendation to full Council (03 March 2022) who would agree the revised fees which would come into effect on the 01 April 2022.

Hackney Carriage Tariffs

- 4.11 It had been agreed at the October 2021 meeting that in future years the discussion on tariffs would be started in January each year. The trade would be canvassed at these meetings on an annual basis as to whether or not fares should be modified. The trade should provide a business case at these meetings as to why the fares should be adjusted and provide a proposal that the Licensing Committee could consider at a future meeting which would then be consulted on. The meeting was also used as an opportunity to discuss lessons learnt from the previous consultation.
- 4.12 The Group, while recognising that there would always be a difference of opinion when it came to varying fares, agreed that a proposal should be brought to the July meeting to vary the fees in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). They also requested that consideration be given to introducing a two tier tariff. One for saloon cars and one for multi-seater vehicles i.e. vehicles that carried more than four passengers. The trade also requested that the issue of mandating the use of time and date stamped meters in the district to minimise the risk of overcharging be considered.
- 4.13 The trade also requested that going forward consideration be given to aligning the fares to CPI in future years.
- 4.14 It was agreed that a report would be brought to the July Licensing Committee meeting and if Members agreed to vary the fees that this would be subjected to the statutory consultation process.

Feedback from the Trade on the Electric Vehicle Day

- 4.15 The trade commented that the presenters were very knowledgeable and they had found the presentation interesting. They were however disappointed with the number of trade representatives that attended and also the range of vehicles that had been provided to test drive. They were small cars and none of them were suitable for use as taxis. The Group agreed to keep discussing ways in which they could support the Council's environmental aspirations and identifying ways in which the Council could support them to be 'greener'.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The TTLG meetings appear to be a valued opportunity for dialogue between elected Members and the trade. It is therefore proposed that at least two meetings will continue to be arranged every year. The next meeting would take place on the 24 October 2022.

- 5.2 The October meeting would afford an opportunity to comment on the proposed fees for 2023/24 prior to the start of the statutory consultation and would be an opportunity to feed back on the tariff consultation.

6 Appendices

- 6.1 None.

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

Name: Moira Fraser
Job Title: Policy and Governance Principal Officer
Tel No: 01635 519045
E-mail: moira.fraser@westberks.gov.uk
