
Taxi/Private Hire Licensing Meeting – Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 A Task and Finish group was asked to be arranged with members, officers and the taxi/private hire trade to deal with Operator licence fees and fares, and then any other matters raised.
- 1.2 Feedback from the meeting and matters agreed are outlined in the supporting information.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 Fees – changes explained. It is proposed to continue with a 5year Operators licence-now to be based on a per vehicle fee. Resulting impact will be that overall fees will be lower, fee based on time per vehicle x proportion of hourly rate per vehicle-as this will be a new regime it needs to be audited going forward. Operator checks to be annual. Trade agreed for new and renewal fees. Dispensation vehicle fee will now be the same as that of HC/PH vehicles (the additional work being picked up during operator inspections).
- 2.2 Tariffs – for Hackney Carriages fares -Previously the Trade provided a proposal to the Licensing Committee, who after further consideration deemed the numbers were wrong and reversed its decision to consult on proposed fares. Members asked that trade start with a basic rate for tariff 1 and then % increase for tariff 2 and tariff 3. Trade desire rates to be less than Reading BC.

Action: Agreed requirement for trade to come forward with proposal by end August - Cabco agreed to lead, then Licensing committee to consider and consult.

Update:-proposal received from Cabco on 22 August for a 9% fare increase on Tariffs 1 and 2 and nothing for Tariff 3 (Appendix 1). Existing Tariff shown as Appendix 2. If members agree with the proposal then the recommendation would be to consult with the trade in its entirety and bring the results back to the next Licensing committee.

- 2.3 Dealing with idling vehicles- following complaints re polluting taxis. WBC has declared a Climate Emergency. Consider adopting legislation to enable Officers to give out fixed penalty notices.

Action: Report on this to be considered at the Committee meeting on 18th November. Cabco to send message to their drivers –agreed should be considered further

- 2.4 Age of Vehicles-Currently WBC does not have a maximum age as part of its terms and conditions. It was felt that maintenance of the vehicle was the key point rather than the age. If an age condition were to be brought in consultation would be required of the trade. Members asked how many of the fleet were over 8 years old ?

Action: Officers asked to find out what the current age profile of the fleet is so the impact could be considered together with the number of HC vehicles that are wheelchair accessible.

Update: Hackney Carriage vehicles total 155 – 8 years and over 55

Private Hire vehicles total 165 - 8 years and over 37

WAV 103 (included 6PH)

2.5 Ranks – Trade consider on a Saturday night there are not enough due to the new bus station. Enforcement officers are moving them on. Letter has been sent from Highways to the Operators. Concern that the ranks are not in the right place.

Action: Officers to contact Highways – e.g consider location of an overflow rank?

Update: Highways response: “The taxi rank outside the old Post Office provides a facility which has in the past seen taxis snaking around into Bear Lane as they waited for custom from the town centre or the Walkabout pub for those taxi drivers not wanting to use Wharf Street.

2.6 The rank outside the Vault nightclub (recently closed) also provides a facility for late evening trade from the Kennet Centre/cinema/night club and if it’s not being used perhaps it can be a holding area/overflow rank? There are ‘evening only’ ranks on Bartholomew St opposite The Dolphin and within the Pedestrian Zone outside what used to be Iceland near The Globe and The Newbury pub.

2.7 There’s a fair amount of space if they are used. What we will not be going back to is having the rank within the Market Place and using Wharf Street as the overflow”.

2.8 Highways are to be asked to respond/attend at the request of the Chairman.

2.9 DBS - query why price is £92 not £40 – WBC need to use Capita HR as requirement to be carried out through WBC. Drivers need to be enhanced checked. Our fee is an administration charge for processing, and WBC check all the documentation (incl. forms of identification).

Action: Officers to check the Capita charge / contract. Response from HR below

Update: Response from HR “Individuals cannot process their own DBS checks, which is why people need to use an organization such as ourselves to process DBS checks.

2.10 The £64 includes the £49 that we are charged by the provider (£44 for each check and £5 for their admin fee). We then add our own £15 HR admin charge which makes this £64. The £15 is called an 'admin fee' but really that's our charge to manage and oversee the whole process and to manage the account with E-Bulk/Capita. We also do our own admin side with charging and setting up accounts.

2.11 HR are the ones who are responsible for the account, and we have to keep up to date with changes to legislation and implement these as required.

2.12 We sit as an umbrella for hundreds of external organisations, providing this service. The drivers' charge was only increased in April (after charging the lower rate for some time) because technically they are external (like these other

organisations), not employees of the Council, so this needed to be brought in line with others". Hence the £64 charge plus half an hour admin from officers processing applications for DBS.

- 2.8 Temporary vehicle after an accident-drivers expressed concerns that if a driver had a WAV they had to have a temporary vehicle of the same calibre which in some instances lead to delays in getting back on the road.

Action: Officers to consider.

Update: this is the regime that is employed across the PPP where a WAV is replaced on a temporary basis with a like for like vehicle. Concern would be that not doing this would lead to abuse of the temporary vehicle, also a non WAV being sat on a rank would lead to complaints of unfairness by other drivers. Officers who deal with these applications can only recall 1 instance where this has been an issue.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Wards affected:

Non-specific

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