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

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	23 January 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Tom Marino
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	N/a

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 Committee notes 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.

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, Executive 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.

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 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.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 It had originally 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 presented to the Executive, and if agreed consulted on and if appropriate implemented during that year.
- 4.4 It should be noted that following the most recent meeting it is proposed that the discussion on the tariffs would be moved to the October meeting with a view to introducing any modifications for the start of the financial year from 2024 onwards. The January meeting would then be used to report back on the outcome of any informal consultation on tariffs and set out the timetable for taking any proposals through the Executive cycle. While modifications would be reflected on annually this would not necessarily mean that any changes would be made each 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. Ad hoc meetings can be arranged to discuss any matters of concern or interest during the year.
- 4.6 Since the November 2022 Licensing Committee meeting one meeting has been held with the taxi trade (09 January 2023) and a summary of the discussions are set out below.

2023/24 Fees

- 4.7 Officers presented the fees and charges for 2023/24 that were discussed at the Joint Public Protection Committee on the 05 October 2022 to the trade at the October 2022 Trade Liaison Group meeting. The Private Hire Operator and Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles License Fees were then subjected to a statutory 28 day consultation period. The feedback from that consultation was presented to the trade at this meeting.
- 4.8 The outcome of the consultation is the subject of a separate paper included on the agenda for this meeting which will provide more detailed information. The Group noted that only four comments were received and therefore inferred that the trade and residents understood the need for the changes and that they had been set at an acceptable level. In terms of the comment about ranks being “full of idle drivers because; as the drivers relate, there are insufficient fares” the trade commented that this was not their experience. The drivers on the ranks tended to be sole traders, other drivers were reasonably busy and were only likely to be found on the ranks at quiet times.
- 4.9 The trade made no further comments on the 2023/24 fees.

Hackney Carriage Tariffs

- 4.10 At the 26 October 2021 Taxi Trade Liaison Group meeting it was agreed that variations to the tariffs would be discussed at the January Taxi Trade Liaison Group meeting each

year. At the recent meeting it was suggested that the trade would like to amend the annual cycle relating to tariffs in that any changes should coincide with the financial year i.e. they should be implemented by the 01 April annually. They accepted that in order to go through due process it might not be possible to achieve this target date in 2023. The Group was supportive of this proposal.

- 4.11 From 2024 onwards it was proposed that the tariffs would be reflected on at the October trade meeting. It might be that modifications would not be required. If the trade were minded to make any changes they would need to submit a proposal to the Council. Informal consultation would be undertaken with the trade to establish if there was support for the proposals more generally. Any modifications, the methodology for consultation and timetabling would be taken to the Executive for a decision. The Licensing Committee would be kept informed about the proposals and progress.
- 4.12 The consultation would be conducted in accordance with the requirements as stipulated within section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. If any objections to the consultation were received the matter would have to return to the Executive for a decision. This would all need to be factored into the timetabling
- 4.13 The group were mindful of the need to balance the needs of the trade with those of residents and other customers. A separate report has been prepared in respect of the 2023 tariffs and is included on this agenda.
- 4.14 In essence the trade suggested at the meeting that:
- For 2023 they would like to see an uplift of the fees linked to CPI (circa 10%);
 - If approved they would like the modification to be implemented as close to the 01 April as was practicably possible but accepted that for 2023 the implementation date was likely to be in June or July;
 - They would like the maximum fouling charges to be revisited and increased and suggested that a maximum charge of £200 should be implemented;
 - They would like to see calendar time and date control to be mandated;
 - They would like the words 'Hiring when journey commences between' to be revisited and replaced to reflect journeys between certain times; and
 - The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy be amended to mandate a requirement for all vehicles to accept credit cards.

Update on the Taxi Policy

- 4.15 It was noted that several meetings had been held with the trade to work through the policy. Officers were now working through each of these matters. Any changes would be discussed with colleagues in the legal team prior to a second draft of the policy being produced.

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 23 October 2023.

6 Appendices

None

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

Report is to note only

Wards affected: All

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