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

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	06 November 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lee Dillon
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 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.
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) was 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 held on the 23 October was attended by the Chairman of the Licensing Committee, and three members of the taxi trade as well as four officers.

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

- 4.3 Traditionally two meetings a year are held, one in October and one in January. Ad hoc meetings can be arranged to discuss any matters of concern or interest during the year. Given the low attendance at these meetings it is being proposed that Officers review the efficacy and format of the meetings going forward.
- 4.4 The notes of the last meeting will be circulated to members of this committee and the trade and are summarised as set out below:

2023/24 Fees

- 4.5 Officers explained to the trade that the draft fees, set out in a separate report on this agenda, had been considered at the Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) meeting on the 02nd October 2023. The JPPC had agreed to recommend that the hourly rate be increased from £64 to £68.25, an increase of 6.7% in line with CPI at the end of August 2023.
- 4.6 The trade was informed that the private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees would be subjected to a statutory 28-day consultation exercise. The dates and methodology of the consultation would need to be agreed by this Licensing Committee. The remainder of the fees would be subjected to any consultation undertaken by the council on the fees more generally. The trade would be informed as to how they could participate in the statutory consultation. In the event that any corporate consultation on fees was undertaken Officers would also keep them informed.
- 4.7 The trade did not comment in any of the fees specifically but did raise concerns about the fees being increased and questioned if they were receiving value for money.

Hackney Carriage Tariffs

- 4.8 Officers noted that as had been agreed the previous year this meeting was an opportunity for the trade to start to discuss proposals around any modifications to the fares for 2024/25. It was noted that CPI was tracking at 6,7% for September and this had previously been used as an indication of the level of uplift the trade would like to go out to consult on.
- 4.9 It had also been proposed during the discussions on the current fares that, in relation to the fouling charges, these should be set using a sliding scale linked to the tariffs. Officers requested that if this approach still found favour with the trade that this should be included in any business case submitted to the Council to base the consultation on.
- 4.10 To date no proposals have been received by the trade. Officers will work with the trade to take any proposals submitted through the appropriate governance and statutory requirements. As has become custom and practice officers would recommend undertaking an informal consultation with the trade before taking any firm proposals to the Executive. This would help to inform any decisions made by Members.

Update on the Taxi Policy

- 4.11 Officers apologised that, due to the ongoing vacancies in the team, this matter had not been progressed. Three new Licensing officers (2.6FTE) had however now been recruited and work on finalising the revised draft policy would begin in the new year.

Any Other Business

4.12 The trade raised a small number of specific concerns relating to illegal parking on taxi ranks. Officers were liaising with the Parking Team about enforcement action.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Officers are looking into the format of these meetings to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and are delivering against the stated aim of providing a forum to 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.

6 Appendices

None

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

Report is to note only

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