

**Report of Head of Licensing and Registration**

**Report to Licensing Committee**

**Date: 9 December 2014**

**Subject: Information report – issues around free ‘wi’fi in private hire vehicles.**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. Licensing Committee has considered two reports in the previous 14 months concerning the approval of free ‘wi-fi’ in wheelchair accessible vehicles. All of the issues involved in that report were approved and the policy is ‘live’.
2. Members asked that a report exploring proposals for free ‘wi-fi’ in Private Hire vehicles be prepared and added to the Committee’s work programme for 2014. This report is the Officer response to that requirement.

**Recommendations**

3. That Members note the information in this report and make any comment they feel appropriate in the circumstances.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the issues and opportunities for free 'wi-fi' in Private Hire vehicles and any regulatory issues.
- 1.2 This is an information report only as there is no decision to be made by Licensing Committee.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.3 The consideration revolves solely around the requests from Licensing Committee Members for Officers to consider the issues around free 'wi-fi' in Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs).
- 2.4 Members will recall that in October 2013 they considered and approved the availability of free 'wi-fi' in the licensed taxi fleet. An update report was prepared for Members in April 2014. The availability of free 'wi-fi' in the initial report was directly linked to 'streaming' advertising into Hackney carriage vehicles.
- 2.5 On 9 September 2014, members considered a report for advertising on digital screens contained within headrests in PHVs. That report was approved by Members. However, there was no 'wi-fi' proposal linked to the concept at that time.
- 2.6 The provision of a free 'wi-fi' facility in today's society is developing into the norm in many areas including the transport sector. This report enables Members to consider how such a facility would/could evolve in licensed PHVs.
- 2.7 There has been no application for free 'wi-fi' in licensed vehicles. Normally such an application would have some commercial enterprise attached to it and the provision of digital display screens in licensed vehicles is a good example of that commercial enterprise.
- 2.8 There is little the Council can do to contain or prevent this and the view of Officers is that the proportionate response is for the public to be responsible for evaluating their own data security. There is an appreciable level of understanding of internet security by the public and for the Council to try and engage in this within a licensing regime; may be considered a step too far by Members. It would of course be an entirely different proposition if a business decision was made by an Operator or some other commercial interest to supply free 'wi-fi' in vehicles and at that point the Council could again consider its stance. In the interim it is recommended that Members simply await commercial developments.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The issues here are around the availability of 'wi-fi' and the effect of that on passenger within a regulatory framework.
- 3.2 Private Hire 'wi-fi' access is in all probability already provided by some operators by the unconscious sharing of access to the internet through mobile devices within the licensed vehicle. For example: the driver's smart phone or the

Operators smart phone receiving booking and despatch systems. The issue here is the security of those devices when internet sharing takes place may not be as good as a currently approved way of providing a 'wi-fi' hotspot in licensed Hackney Carriages.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 There is no intended policy restriction or policy changes that require a consultation process.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 There are no issues to consider.

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

4.3.1 The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing policies contribute to the following aims:

#### **Best Council Plan 2013 -17**

#### **Towards being an Enterprising Council**

#### **Our Ambition and Approach**

**Our Ambition** is for Leeds to be the best city and Leeds City Council to be the best council in the UK – fair, open and welcoming with an economy that is both prosperous and sustainable so all our communities are successful.

**Our Approach** is to adopt a new leadership style of civic enterprise, where the council becomes more enterprising, business and partners become more civic, and citizens become more actively engaged in the work of the city.

#### **Our Best Council Outcomes**

Make it easier for people to do business with us

#### **Our Best Council Objectives**

Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth – Improving the economic wellbeing of local people and businesses. With a focus on:

- Helping people into jobs,
- Boosting the local economy
- Generating income for the council

Ensuring high quality public services – improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city. With a focus on;

- Getting services right first time
- Improving customer satisfaction

4.3.2 The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing policies contribute to priorities:

- Reduce crime levels and their impact across Leeds
- Effectively tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour in communities

#### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 Not applicable on this occasion.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 Not applicable on this occasion.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 Officers suggest that the issues raised in this report do not fall within the arena of requiring a risk management assessment.

### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 In reality the situation regarding access to 'wi-fi' in PHVs today is very much as it has been for a number of years and there have been no complaints or adverse information received. With that in mind Members may wish to just note this report and let the matter lie until there is commercial interest expressed that might fall within the regulatory framework.

### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Members note the information in this report and make any comment they feel appropriate in the circumstances.

### **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

Licensing Committee Report dated 15 October 2013 – Wi-fi in Taxis

Licensing Committee Report dated 8 April 2014 – Update report on the uptake of 'wi-fi' in Cabs.

Licensing Committee Report dated 9 September 2014 – A proposed policy – digital advertising screens in licensed vehicle.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.