

LICENSING AND REGULATORY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor R D Feldman in the Chair

Councillors S Armitage, A Blackburn,
J Dunn, V Morgan and D Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr D Broster – LCC Taxi & Private Hire Section
Mr P Roberts – West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Association
Mr T McSharry – Access Committee for Leeds
Mr D Littlewood – Access Committee for Leeds
Mr P Stephens – LCC Chief Economic Services Officer
Mr K Darch – Principal Engineer, LCC Highways Services
Ms C McCall – Leeds Community Safety
Mr M Darwin – LCC Head of Highways Development

32 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

33 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dowson, Grayshon, Selby and Wilkinson

34 Remit of the Special Meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Panel

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report briefly setting out the remit for this special meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Panel to form the basis of discussions

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted and the proposed remit for the meeting as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report be agreed

35 Issues relating to Hackney Carriage Provision in Leeds

The Panel considered documentation in relation to Hackney Carriage provision in Leeds as follows:

- a) Minutes of the last Panel meeting held 8th January 2008 where Members had resolved to call this additional Special meeting
- b) Minutes of a Hackney Carriage (HC) trade meeting held 2nd January 2008 which included proposals for new ranks in the city
- c) City centre map supplied by LCC Highways Services which showed each rank within the city centre.

Having regard to the remit for discussions at this Special meeting, the Panel went onto discuss issues related to the increased numbers of taxis in the city centre since the loss of the Leeds/Bradford Airport contract and immediate identification of measures needed to address this. Members were particularly concerned about the perceived lack of public awareness of the location of taxi ranks in the city centre other than the Railway Station rank.

Awareness of rank locations

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Tuesday, 4th March, 2008

- Signage – Mr Stephens reported that City Centre Management was to review the legibility of the city centre, including directional signage and this would refer to taxi ranks. He added that “finger posts” were in place at rank locations in the city but there was some concern particularly from disability groups, that an increased number of signs on the pavements would create clutter, further obstructions and be detrimental to the streetscene. Mr Darch referred to a taxi sign with lighting currently in use on ranks in London and suggested use of this style of rank for Leeds could be investigated. Additionally the design of the flag signs currently in use could be reviewed
- Mr Darch reported that road signage and markings were governed by Government legislation. He added the “finger posts” had been erected by highways at the request of the HC trade, but technically were not highways responsibility as not on the highway
- Road markings – were in use to delineate ranks on the highway
- Shelters – Panel noted that bus stop style shelters at ranks were in use in Sheffield. These incorporated lighting, a taxi sign to the roof, chevron road markings to delineate the rank on the highway and were set back from the pavement. Members supported the suggestion that the use of similar shelters should be investigated in Leeds.
- Mr Darch explained that LCC Highways did not have the power to provide shelters. It was noted that some shelters had been erected as a pilot scheme by T&PH Section some years ago. These had required planning permission and Highways services agreement and their continued maintenance did not fall within Highways remit. Mr Darch sought to establish whether T&PH Section would be willing to lead on similar installations again and discussion followed on likely sources of funding
- Enforcement – Officers reported that enforcement activity was to focus on the city centre, and sought Members support for this commenting that officers undertaking this work were often lobbied by the PH trade or their supporters

Locations of Ranks

- Mr Darch referred to the map included in the documents stating only 4 or 5 existing ranks required passengers to be loaded from the road side rather than kerbside. These were historical ranks that could be revisited or taken out
- Panel discussed current provision around the bus station which they regarded as inadequate and noted comments that the external layout of the bus station had been done without liaison with the local disability groups. Members sought commitment to new ranks or the realignment of ranks in that area.
- Ranks did exist near to the bus station on Dyer Street and New York Street but these were not integral to the bus station

New Ranks

- Members noted comments that ranks which stated “4” spaces could in fact only house 2 of the larger new vehicles. Officers responded that all new ranks provided 5m space per vehicle.

- Mr Darwin referred to the future redevelopment of Eastgate Quarter which had involved a kerbside study in the drafting of the applications. The whole kerbside was being reviewed for bus stop and taxi rank usage and rank numbers would increase. Works were to commence during 2008 to be completed by 2012 and would include amendments to George Street to allow two way traffic and kerb side loading.
- Agreed that any re-alignment of existing ranks should ensure that the passengers alight from the vehicle onto the kerbside and that ranks be available on both sides of a road where possible
- Mr Darch reported he was in receipt of the list of suggested ranks and proposed to meet with HC reps within the next three weeks to discuss. New ranks proposed for Greek Street and New Briggate were already being processed. Only the New Briggate rank had attracted an objection and once this was dealt with the works to create the ranks could be contacted out to commence as soon as practicable

Role of WYPTE

- Noted there had been greater involvement with local user groups, including disability groups, since the bus station completed
- Use of bus stops for taxi ranks – Mr Roberts noted the comments that WYPTE had previously not supported this suggestion. He expressed concern that some bus stops were currently being used illegally by private hire plying for hire or members of the public parking especially on Woodhouse Lane. He now felt it appropriate to investigate dual use of bus stops and was willing to attend any discussions on this matter. Mr Roberts did reiterate however the need to protect bus stops during normal hours of use; to have regard to the conditions necessary to create and enforce ranks; the necessary costs incurred to create dual use stops and future responsibility for maintenance
- Mr Roberts suggested one location to pilot such a scheme should be identified, consisting of two or three bus stops, to evaluate the usage before consideration for rest of city
- The Panel noted some buses did operate past 12 midnight and a list of these would be needed to identify a dual usage pilot location to avoid conflict of use
- Mr Darch reported a total of 5 bus stops around the public transport box had already been identified for use beyond the last bus service at 11.30 pm, however legislation prevented immediate implementation. The Department had written to Central Government seeking approval to implement the necessary highways signs and markings which did not conform to the “Book” – the Book being the regulations by which standard highways markings are made – in November 2007 and were awaiting approval. The Department also sought agreement to use the proposed system generally in Leeds rather than permission being site specific; however this proposal had not been well received. If approval was granted, highways could implement the measures on those sites identified by the HC Trade on Boar Lane and Briggate Street. Mr Darch however urged caution with these measures as the removal of bus stops after 11.30 pm could lead to LCC being seen to condone the illegal practices of some members of the PH trade. Full legal approval

was required to enable the highways to be conditioned and enforced properly

Liaison

- Panel supported the comments of the Access Committee representatives that service users should be involved in any consultation process. Panel noted the offer that as an independent lobby group they could approach Central Government regarding the legislation governing signage and markings to the highways in order to impress the importance of access for all, noting the Government was also a public body with DDA targets to achieve
- Mr McSharry reported the railway station rank had been built without due regard to the disabled groups, and had since had to be re-aligned to provide access for all
- Members supported the suggestion for trade reps to meet with Mr Darwin to discuss the Eastgate redevelopment proposals and kerbside study
- Members supported the suggestion that Mr Stephens meet with representatives of the Access Committee to discuss consultation undertaken so far and future priorities

Leeds Bradford Airport

- Noted the concerns voiced by representatives of the Access Committee regarding the new private hire provision at the airport
- Noted the concern of the HC Trade representatives over the use of the generic term "taxi" on signage at the Airport
- Noted the system now in place at the Airport for travel provision for passengers and voiced concern that this may not adequately provide a service to the public in terms of information available and assistance plus the impact the change of service provider had on disabled passengers or those with mobility problems.
- Noted that officers had approached the Airport to seek provision of a taxi drop off point, but the request had been refused

Proposals

- LCC Taxi and Private Hire Section to lead on the investigation of funding opportunities and safety implications of bus stop style taxi shelters in conjunction with LCC City Centre Management and Community Safety. Mr Roberts of WYPTE offered to attend to any discussions regarding shelters
- Officers to consider the legibility of the flag design taxi signs; the removal or realignment of the 4/5 historical taxi ranks which load from the roadside and to investigate the possible implementation of the taxi rank sign with lighting in Leeds
- Representatives of the HC trade to meet with Mr Darch to discuss their suggested ranks
- To note that officers of the T & PH Section intend to meet with representatives of the Access Committee to discuss their concerns regarding Leeds/Bradford transport arrangements
- That the Chair of the Panel write to all Members of Council regarding the forthcoming enforcement activity in the city centre to highlight the necessity of this work having regard to the safety of the public.

RESOLVED –

- a) That all parties be thanked for their attendance and input into this meeting
- b) That all the matters outlined above be progressed having regard to the relevant legislation; future ownership and maintenance of the ranks and legal implications
- c) That update reports be presented to an appropriate Panel meeting in approximately 3 months time