

Licensing Committee

Tuesday, 2nd November, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor P Wray in the Chair

Councillors P Alderson, N Buckley,
R Downes, B Flynn, J Gibson, A Hutchison,
Illingworth, J Lennox, L Richards and
L Martin

32 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

33 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no late items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the nature of the business to be considered.

34 Late Items

Although there were formal late items the Committee did acknowledge receipt of representations from the Hackney Carriage Association and Joint Trades Council who had offered comment on the Taxi and Private Hire Harmonisation proposals (Item No. 9 of the agenda)

35 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.

36 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: H Bithell, A Garthwaite and A Smart.

37 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th August 2021, were accepted as a true and correct record.

38 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no issues raised under Matters Arising.

39 Cumulative Impact Assessment

The Chief Officer Elections and Regulatory submitted a report which sought approval for an interim review and consultation to ensure that the cumulative impact areas remained in place until a detailed and thorough review of the assessment could take place in 2022.

Addressing the report, the Principal Licensing Officer explained that following the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown measures, activity within the city centre and other cumulative impact areas was significantly reduced. It was further reported that crime rates for the same period were also low.

Members were informed that in July 2021 corona virus restrictions were relaxed resulting in an increase of the activity within the night-time economy. As night-time activity increased so did the crime rates.

Members were informed that the last assessment was undertaken in 2018.

The Principal Licensing Officer said it was important that up-to-date intelligence and analysis was now gathered to determine if the cumulative impact areas remained appropriate.

Members were supportive of the proposal for an interim review and consultation

RESOLVED – That approval be given for an interim review and consultation to ensure that the cumulative impact areas remain appropriate until a detailed and thorough review of the assessment can take place in 2022.

40 Taxi & Private Hire Licensing - West Yorkshire & York Harmonisation

The Chief Officer, Elections and Regulatory submitted a report which provided a summary of progress by the council and neighbouring councils on aligning taxi and private hire policies and practice to improve passenger safety.

Addressing the report, the Taxi & Private Hire Licensing Manager spoke of the main issues in trying to align different taxi and private hire policies and practice. Members were informed that the five West Yorkshire Council's plus the City of York Council had identified six areas where they could work to improve passenger safety in the region:

- CCTV in vehicles – to discourage and detect inappropriate behaviour by any person in a taxi or private hire vehicle
- Convictions (now called Suitability) – to take steps so that an individual with convictions and allegations against them couldn't move from being licensed by one licensing authority and moving to another without being properly checked
- Driver training – to develop common training policies and assessment methods and standards
- Enforcement capacity and practice – to strengthen on street enforcement and equip enforcement teams with the means to take or initiate enforcement action on drivers and vehicles licensed in other licensing authorities

- Information sharing – to improve information sharing about licence holders who are believed to pose a risk to passengers across the region
- Vehicle conditions – to improve vehicle condition standards so that a weak policy in one authority does not pose risks across the region.

Members were informed that the six local authorities had all implemented driver training policies, information sharing and suitability policies, and delivered cross-border enforcement powers and staff training. However, there remained outstanding areas of policy development, vehicle conditions was highlighted by the trade as a particular area of concern along with cross border working.

The Chair asked if a report could be prepared for a future meeting of this committee which provided an indication of the number of taxi drivers operating in Leeds who were registered elsewhere.

In terms of discussions with the trade, the Chair said he was willing to meet with the trade to discuss areas of concern but a practical working relationship with structured meetings was required.

In the discussion that followed Members were informed that up to 700 vehicles and 300 drivers may not return to the taxi and private hire industry, many drivers choosing alternative driving opportunities where the driver operating conditions and the requirement around vehicle standards was not as robust as those for a taxi/hackney carriage vehicle.

One Member said the taxi and private hire trade had been badly affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic and suggested that discussions round harmonisation be paused until the trade had time to recover.

The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing Manager said many other City Regions and Local Authorities were involved in harmonisation discussions some using alternative models (Manchester)

The Chair suggested it would be useful to know what alternative models were been considered and to understand what the priorities were in other areas.

The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing Manager said the necessary enquiries would be made.

In terms of next steps, the Chair said that he, as Chair of the Licensing Committee together with the Executive Member (Resources) would shortly meet with their counterparts in the five West Yorkshire Council's plus the City of York Council with a view to progressing the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing harmonisation project.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted

- (ii) That a report be prepared for a future meeting which provided an indication of the number of taxi drivers operating in Leeds who were registered elsewhere.
- (iii) That details of alternative harmonisation models being considered and to understand what the priorities were in other areas be prepared for Members information.

41 Work Programme

Members considered the ongoing Licensing Committee Work Programme for 2021/22.

RESOLVED – That the Licensing Committee Work Programme for 2021/22 be approved.

42 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED - To note that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 14th December 2021 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds.