

LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 21 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: Councillor Woodward (Chair);
Councillors Edwards (Vice-Chair), Carnell, Challenger, Cresswell,
G Dennis, Ennis, Keane, Kitchingham and Mitchell

Apologies: Councillors Page and Rowland

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Licensing Applications Committee meeting held on 10 October 2022 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

10. REVISION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVER AND VEHICLE CONDITIONS

The Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Committee that officers had recently reviewed the specifications and conditions relating to Hackney Carriage Drivers (HCD) and vehicles (HCV) in consultation with the Hackney Trade and Reading Taxi Association (RTA). This had resulted in proposals to either remove or amend some wording of the conditions to bring them up to date.

The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1 Proposed Hackney Carriage Driver Conditions
- Appendix 2 Proposed Hackney Carriage Vehicle Conditions;
- Appendix 3 Climate Impact Assessment.

The report explained that the conditions relating to HCDs and HCVs had last been amended at the Licensing Applications Committee meeting held on 6 June 2018, to bring in compulsory electronic payment devices (Minute 2 refers). The proposed changes and the reasons for the amendments were set out in section 4.2 of the report. The Committee noted that changing the byelaws attached to HCD and HCV licences could be a lengthy process and this would be carried out as a separate piece of work to prevent delay to the updating of the conditions.

Resolved - That the amended Hackney Carriage Driver and Vehicles specifications and conditions as attached to the report at Appendices 1 and 2 be approved.

11. HACKNEY CARRIAGE UNMET DEMAND 2023

Further to Minute 3 of the meeting held on 12 July 2022, the Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider whether an Unmet Demand Survey should be carried out during autumn 2023 and whether it would be appropriate to amend the current limiting policy approach to Hackney

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carriage numbers. Officers submitted details of the cost of carrying out the survey, which would be met by Hackney Carriage Vehicle owners and the following documents were attached to the report:

Appendix i: - Email to and reply from the RTA;
Appendix ii - Email to and replies from drivers;
Appendix iii - Climate Impact Assessment.

The report explained that a moratorium on the issue of new hackney carriage vehicle licences had been implemented in March 2009 and had been maintained ever since, following analysis of unmet demand surveys completed in 2012, 2015 and 2018, each of which confirmed there was no significant underlying unmet demand for hackney carriages in Reading. Officers had been in the process of arranging a new survey in accordance with the Taxi requirements of Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 and the Department for Transport and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance 2010 (Sections 45 to 51) when the Covid19 pandemic had caused the country to go into three national lockdowns which had made it impossible to continue with the implementation of a survey.

The report set out guidance that had been produced by the Department for Transport which stated:

“Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 does not specify the frequency of the unmet demand assessment, but the Department’s Best Practice Guidance issued in 2010 suggested this is conducted every three years. Though the decision as to when an unmet demand survey is conducted remains that for a licensing authority, we are aware that we are in a very unusual situation at present; while this continues it would seem highly unlikely that there would be significant unmet demand for taxis. We would expect unmet demand surveys to be conducted once travel levels return to more normal levels or if concerns are raised by the trade or public.”

The report explained that no public consultation had taken place but comments had been requested from the trade organisations. The response from the Reading Taxi Association (RTA) explained that 10 of the 250 members had asked for a further delay and that the RTA therefore supported an Unmet Demand Survey during Autumn 2023.

Asif Rashid representing the RTA and Chris Avery, taxi driver, attended the meeting, addressed the Committee, and confirmed to the Committee that the RTA agreed the survey should be carried out during Autumn 2023. The RTA stated that the company carrying out the survey would provide a complete report on the survey results and that it would be not be necessary for representatives of the company to attend a future meeting of the Licensing Applications Committee to make a presentation.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Unmet Demand Survey be implemented in autumn 2023 and a report on the results be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee;**

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- (2) That the current policy of not issuing any further hackney carriage licences outside the agreed number of 216, be retained pending a review following the survey in autumn 2023.

(The meeting closed at 6.57 pm)