

Minutes

Licensing Committee

25th March 2009



Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
M J Banthorpe (Chairman)	Yes	T McArdle	Yes
J C Collar	Apologies	A M Meyer	Yes
J G J Elliott	Yes	Mrs J A Pell	Apologies
J H G Finbow	Yes	D E A Rice	Yes
Mrs S A Howell	Apologies	A F Shelton	Apologies
P J Hughes	Yes	Mrs J A Smith	Yes
E R Lynch	Yes	F Swallow	Yes
M Lynch	Yes		

23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

24 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 3rd September 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

26 **HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE – VEHICLE LIVERY**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a further report on the introduction of new livery for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles. Members were reminded of the previous discussions which had taken place on this matter.

It was proposed that signs should be placed on the front, rear and side of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles. These would enable members of the public to identify individual vehicles and to see that they were licensed as either Hackney Carriage or Private Hire. Samples of the proposed livery were circulated at the meeting.

The proposed livery had been considered at the Braintree and District Taxi Association Liaison Panel meeting on 19th February 2009 when it had been agreed that the new livery should be implemented with effect from September 2009 as this was when all 84 licensed Hackney Carriage vehicles would be inspected. It was proposed that Private Hire vehicles should be supplied with the new livery as and when their licences became due for renewal. This would be implemented over the

course of the year from September 2009. The cost of implementing the new livery would be recouped from the vehicle licence fee.

As a consequence of introducing the new livery, it would be necessary to amend the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licence conditions in respect of exterior signs, advertisements and exemptions. The revised conditions were set out in the report.

In discussing this item, Members considered that the words 'no booking no ride' on the Private Hire vehicle livery should be enlarged.

DECISION:

- (1) That the proposed new livery for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles be approved for implementation from September 2009, subject to consideration being given to increasing the font of the words 'no booking no ride' on the Private Hire vehicle livery, with any changes to the font being agreed with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee.
- (2) That the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licence conditions in respect of exterior signs, advertisements and exemptions be amended as set out in the report.

27 DRIVER AND VEHICLE LICENSING AGENCY – DRIVER'S LICENCE RECORD CHECK

INFORMATION: The Committee considered a report on the proposed introduction of a procedure for checking all new and renewal Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle driver's licence applications against Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) records.

Members were reminded that the Council was required by law to ensure that licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers were 'fit and proper persons'. This responsibility included ensuring that drivers had a valid DVLA driving licence.

Currently, all new applicants and drivers applying to renew their licence were required to produce their DVLA driving licence for inspection. However, except when Officers had cause for concern, no further checks were made of the driving licence and it was acknowledged that in certain circumstances a driver with endorsements on his/her licence could conceal driving offences by producing an old licence without the endorsements on it.

It was reported that many local authorities now carried out checks by obtaining copies of DVLA driver records. These contained information relating to a driver from when he/she was first authorised to drive, including information about applications for replacement licences, endorsements and revocations.

It was proposed that the Council should implement a procedure for checking DVLA records. This would require a driver, on submitting a new or renewal application for a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire driver's licence, to sign a consent form authorising the DVLA to release his/her driver record information to the Council. There would be a cost of £5 per check which would be payable to the DVLA and it was proposed that this should be recouped through the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's

licence application fee. It was proposed that if a driver was not willing to sign a consent form his/her application should not be processed until such time as he/she was willing to do so.

DECISION: That a procedure for checking Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's licence applications against Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency records be introduced, with immediate effect for all new applications and from April 2009 for renewal applications.

28 **QUALITY TAXI PARTNERSHIP**

INFORMATION: It was reported that Essex County Council had been working for some time to establish Quality Taxi Partnerships (QTP) across Essex and Members were asked to consider whether a QTP should be set up for the Braintree District.

It was noted that a QTP was a framework to facilitate improved joint working between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire operators and drivers, and other organisations including the District Council, Essex County Council, Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service. The objectives of the Partnership were to improve the customer care skills of drivers; to improve on-street waiting facilities for customers; to provide priority access where possible through the District; to improve working relationships and understanding between partners; to assist in developing a locally deliverable training package; and to make taxi journeys as safe as they could be.

Members of the QTP would be required to sign up to a QTP Voluntary Agreement; to abide by the QTP Passenger Charter and, additionally, drivers would be required to undertake appropriate training within six months of becoming a member. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire operators and drivers would be expected to indicate their membership by including the QTP logo on their vehicles and by displaying the Passenger Charter in the vehicle. As part of the QTP, Essex County Council would accept responsibility for improving priority access and undertaking necessary highway requirements for the provision of permanent taxi ranks in the District and take responsibility for the regular maintenance of and repairs required to taxi rank infrastructure and passenger shelters.

In order to establish a QTP for the Braintree District, it would be necessary to obtain general agreement from both the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trades and other potential partners. Following this, it would be possible to develop a management structure and to draft a Braintree QTP Agreement.

DECISION: That a Quality Taxi Partnership be established in the Braintree District.

At the close of the meeting, it was agreed that training should be arranged for Councillors focussing on their role and their responsibilities as Members of the Driver's Panel.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

M J BANTHORPE
(Chairman)