

**SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**TAXI TRADE FORUM**

**Meeting held at 6.00pm on Monday 21 March 2005**

Present: Colin Foster (Licensing Manager)  
Dave Lee (Democratic Services Officer)  
David Stewart (Licensing Enforcement Officer)

In Attendance: Mr P Tattersall  
Mr J Gregory  
Mr P Briggs  
Mr R Bailey  
Mr J Dean  
Mr P Burrow  
Mr P Hayes  
Mr D Malaney  
Mr D Snape  
Mr P Tidmarsh  
Mr D Pick  
Mr M Gardner  
Mrs D Gardner

The Licensing Manager welcomed those present.

**17. The De-Restriction of Hackney Carriage Vehicles**

The Licensing Manager informed the meeting that the council's General Licensing Committee considered a report on 7 March 2005 in respect of the proposed response to government proposals in relation to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) report on 'The Regulation of Licensed Taxi and PHV (Private Hire Vehicles) Services in the UK'.

The basis of the guidance was that local authorities should de-restrict or prove why they did not.

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) produced a report in 2003 essentially stating that there should be no restrictions on the number of hackney carriage vehicles unless it could be justified by an unmet demand survey. However, the criteria for the survey were much wider than the survey undertaken by the council.

The previous survey considered a rank observation programme and a series of on street interviews. There was 'no significant unmet demand' and therefore hackney carriage numbers had been restricted.

A future unmet demand survey must consider –

- all consumer demand through a survey, including "latent consumer demand"
- consumer and passenger groups (including disabled)
- all those working in the market
- groups representing those passengers with special needs
- the police
- a wide range of transport stakeholders example rail/bus/coach providers and traffic managers

As the survey was wider there was no assurance that there would be no significant unmet demand. In addition, it must be carried out every three years and the cost would be passed on to the trade in licence fees.

Therefore, it was suggested that the council deregulate and thereby grant a taxi licence to anyone meeting the following amended application criteria for hackney carriage vehicles –

1. No hackney carriage to be over 3 years old (date of registration or manufactured/first used whichever was earlier) at the time of first licensing.
2. All hackney carriages to be purpose built and be wheelchair accessible.
3. Hackney carriage vehicle to be removed from service at licence expiry when ten years old (date of first registration or manufactured/first used whichever was earlier).
4. All other vehicles must be licensed as private hire vehicles (PHV) against the existing PHV criteria.

(It was suggested that this would come into force on 1 May 2005.)

In order to protect small businesses of South Ribble it was proposed that a preparation period of eight years was allowed for current hackney carriage operators. Therefore they would operate under current conditions regarding hackney carriages until 1 May 2013. This was for current licence holders only and any new applications would be subjected to the above criteria.

The council's General Licensing Committee held on 7 March resolved to adopt this proposal in principal and refer it to the Taxi Trade Forum for consultation and that the comments expressed at the meeting would be reported to a future meeting of the committee for consideration.

The Licensing Manager and the Licensing Enforcement Officer responded to the following matters raised –

- The existing number of hackney carriage vehicles with wheel chair access
- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- Protecting the interest of hackney carriage vehicles/drivers in the borough against disabled people who would have a strong case for access under the DDA
- The discontinuation of saloons and converted vehicles for wheel chair access
- The government's initiative to prevent large investments in respect of the sale of hackney carriage vehicle licence plates

In relation to private hire vehicles, it was reported that these vehicles would not be affected by the de-restriction as there were no legislation to cap private hire.

During the course of the meeting, the following suggestions were made to the proposed application criteria for hackney carriage vehicles –

- (a) no hackney carriage (purpose built and wheelchair accessible) to be over 6 years old at the time of first registration and vehicles to be removed from service at the expiry of the licence when 12 years old (date of first registration or manufactured/first used whichever was earlier);
- (b) in order to protect small businesses, a period of 10 years be allowed for current hackney carriage operators/licence holders to operate under the existing hackney carriage conditions until 1 May 2015;

- (c) any new applications following 1 May 2005 would be subject to the proposed application criteria;
- (d) the possibility of a corporate colour scheme for purpose built taxis in order to distinguish taxis from the borough; and
- (e) due to the possible large amount of purpose built taxis from 1 May 2005 to 1 May 2013/15 to be purchased from approved firms, whether the council could negotiate a special discounted price for purpose built taxis in order to assist the hackney carriage taxi trade.

It was reported that the comments expressed at the meeting would be forwarded to the General Licensing Committee for consideration.

#### **18. Any Other Business**

The meeting discussed private hire vehicle door signs and it was reported that the matter would be investigated.

(The meeting finished at 7.18pm)