

Minutes of	Licensing and Public Safety Committee
Meeting date	Tuesday, 8 March 2022
Committee members present:	Councillors James Flannery (Chair), Renee Blow (Vice-Chair), Jacky Alty, Julie Buttery, Jacqui Mort, Peter Mullineaux, Alan Ogilvie and Margaret Smith
Committee members attended virtually (non-voting):	Councillor Paul Wharton-Hardman
Officers present:	Tasneem Safdar (Shared Legal Services Team Leader), Chris Ward (Licensing Manager), Coral Astbury (Democratic and Member Services Officer) and Justin Abbotts (Licensing Officer)
Public:	2

13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Jane Bell and John Rainsbury.

Councillor Margaret Smith attended as a substitute for Councillor Rainsbury and Councillor Paul Wharton-Hardman attended the meeting virtually.

14 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15 Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 5 January 2022 of Licensing and Public Safety Committee

Resolved:

The minutes of the last meeting held, Wednesday 5 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

16 Consultation Feedback - Vehicle Age Policy

The Chair explained that this item had been withdrawn as Officers had identified a need to consult further.

17 Consultation Feedback - Single Use/Restricted Private Hire Licence

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Planning and Development that provided feedback on the consultation carried out in response to the intended policy amendments, with regards to the recent request from South Ribble Borough

Council (SRBC) licensed operators for a single use/restricted private hire licence (PVH) to be available.

The Licensing Manager explained that a request had received in December by an SRBC operator for a single use/ restricted PVH licence to be available. The request had been received from an operator which solely performed school contract work with drivers working predominantly outside of the borough not requiring any local knowledge of the area.

A consultation exercise had been undertaken with three proposals, and 42 responses were received in support of option one. The Licensing Manager explained that 39 of those responses were received from Drivers who exclusively work for an operator who only performs private hire work.

It was the Officer's view that option three would be the best option. Officers had found that drivers were failing the test multiple times before getting licensed elsewhere. Resulting in an increased amount of out of town drivers operating in the South Ribble area, with Officers having no enforcement powers over these drivers. The Licensing Manager explained that the additional hackney carriage test, highway code, english and math skills section of the test would remain in place and would not be changed.

In response to a member enquiry, it was confirmed that the consultation was provided to all licenced drivers. A lot of the responses had been received from the school operator whose best interest it was to have the single use badges in operation.

Members sought clarification on how the single use badge would be enforced and how it would be presented to members of the public. It was confirmed that officers could add a condition to the licence which would require signage to be displayed on the vehicle so the public would know it was a restricted licence.

A Member of the Public addressed the committee and explained that they were passionate about school transport. The local area knowledge test would not benefit their drivers as they complete one route a day, quite often taking passengers out of the borough. The operator explained that they were sending drivers down to Essex to be licenced which was cumbersome and only a limited number of drivers could be taken on. The operator advised Members that 58 children in the borough were currently not going to school in the borough and were being transported by a standard taxi, who would not have the same vetting, equipment or experience or by their parents.

Members considered all proposals and agreed that Option 3 was the preferred option, emphasising the need to keep the english and maths element of the test. Drivers would also be asked to undertake a Sat Nav test to demonstrate their understanding on how they operated.

Resolved: (Unanimously)

1. The committee note the report.
2. The committee considered all consultation responses and agreed to recommend Option 3 (the removal of the local area knowledge test

completely for all new Private Hire Licences, but keeping a section of the test for highway code, english and math skills) to the next meeting of Council with the recommendation for formal adoption of the proposed policy.

18 Consultation Feedback - Request for Taxi Tariff Increase

The committee considered a report of the Director of Planning and Development that sought to provide feedback with regards to the written request received from members of the taxi trade to increases in the taxi tariff as set by the authority.

The Licensing Manager explained that a written request had been received in January requesting four increases to the taxi tariff. Drivers had requested that recent factors such as the cost of living since 2015, recent fuel price increases, second hand vehicle increases, impact of COVID on drivers and lack of grants for licensed drivers be considered. A Taxi Trade Forum had been held in January and several drivers had felt the increase was not high enough. As a result, a second taxi trade forum was held. The trade advised that they had discussed the increase collectively and agreed that it was enough, further increases to the original proposal would not be fair on their customers who were also experiencing rising costs.

The Licensing Manager explained that the consultation was provided to every licensed driver, vehicle proprietor and licensed operator. Of the consultation responses, 57 responded yes to increase, 3 responded with no and officers had received no objections from members of the public.

The Chair thanked Officer's for their assistance and explained that additional consultation meetings with the trade had been held. The trade had been encouraged to meet and decide collectively.

Members agreed that the proposed increase in fare had been well debated, with the proposed increases reasonable. Members commented that had the consultation been undertaken more recently, the proposed increases may well have been larger.

Members did note that the proposed increase would affect some vulnerable residents, however it was accepted that there were alternative transport provisions in place.

Resolved: (For: 7 Against: 1)

For: *Councillors Alty, BATTERY, Flannery, Mort, Mullineaux, Ogilvie and Smith.*

Against: *Councillor Blow*

1. The contents of the report were noted.
2. Members accept the proposed changes to the Tariff of Fares set by the licensing authority in line with Section 65(4) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, with the new tariff to come into force on 1 April 2022.

19 Statutory HMRC Checks for Taxi/Private Hire Driver Applications

The Licensing Manager presented a report of the Director of Planning and Development which sought approval to adopt the statutory HMRC checks to renewal applications for all licensed Hackney and Private Hire Drivers, operator licences and scrap metal licences.

The Licensing Manager explained that the government had implemented new tax requirements for applications for certain license from April 2022. The check would be confirming that someone is appropriately registered for tax and would only be required for renewal applications.

Resolved: (Unanimously)

1. The committee recommend the approval of the Statutory HMRC checks to be implemented within the Taxi Licensing Policy and refer this decision to the next meeting of Full Council for a decision.

Chair

Date