

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

MEETING	LICENSING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE
DATE	4 JULY 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS GILLIES (CHAIR), FIRTH, HORTON, LOOKER AND MOORE (VICE-CHAIR)

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Cllr Gillies declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (Application to Approve Pedicabs for use as Hackney Carriages), as the former owner of a hackney carriage plate.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting, held on 21 May 2008, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

31. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that six members of the public had registered their wish to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme. Five had registered to speak on the same item. The Chair agreed to hear comments from all five speakers on that item, provided there was no repetition.

Paul Sykes, of York Pedicabs, spoke in relation to agenda item 4 (Minute 32 refers). He expressed support for the proposals to issue hackney carriage licences for pedicabs, noting that he had operated pedicabs in York without problems for 18 months. The proposals would deter illegal operators, and would help to promote York as a cycling city.

Larry Taylor spoke in relation to agenda item 5 (Minute 33 refers), as the proprietor of a taxi firm. He expressed support for the Council's efforts to improve air quality. However, he also sought assurances that Council Officers had a proper understanding of the Euro Standards to be applied to private hire vehicles and that undue emphasis would not be placed upon the age of the vehicle, since this was not the sole factor affecting vehicle emissions.

Michael Robertson-Moss spoke in relation to agenda item 5, as the operator of a private hire vehicle. He expressed concern about the proposal not to grant a first licence to any vehicle over four years old from 1 November 2009, on the basis that most drivers were unable to afford newer cars in view of the current high price of fuel, tyres and maintenance.

He noted that some older cars were in fact in better condition and asked whether similar rules would be applied to buses and other public vehicles.

Barry Haymer spoke in relation to agenda item 5, as the operator of a private hire vehicle and the Chairman of the Private Hire Association. He endorsed the comments made by the previous two speakers and asked that the proposals in the report be deferred.

Stuart Hird spoke in relation to agenda item 5, as the operator of a private hire vehicle. He emphasised the expense involved in setting up a wheelchair-accessible private hire vehicle and asked that the proposed age limit for granting a first licence be extended to make this more financially viable.

Mark Wilson spoke in relation to agenda item 5 as the operator of two wheelchair-accessible private hire vehicles. He sought clarification on the proposal not to re-license any private hire vehicle painted black after 31 October 2010, which appeared to conflict with the advice given in a letter sent by the Council to all private hire vehicle proprietors on 4 September 2007.

Members also received written comments on agenda item 5 from Jim Kerr and Cllr Dave Taylor, both of whom were unable to attend the meeting.

32. APPLICATION TO APPROVE PEDICABS FOR USE AS HACKNEY CARRIAGES

Members considered a report which asked them to decide whether Pedicabs should be licensed to operate as hackney carriage vehicles in the City of York and, if so, how many licences should be issued. The matter had been brought to the meeting on 17 March 2008 but had been deferred pending the outcome of an un-met demand survey.

Pedicabs were essentially un-motorised tricycles able to carry up to three passengers. They had last been licensed in York 15 years ago under the Town Policy Clauses Act 1989 but had not proved successful at that time. Since the lifting of the hackney carriage numbers in the City in November 2007, the Council had had the power to license pedicabs as hackney carriages. The survey had indicated that there was a significant un-met demand for hackney carriage vehicle licenses and that about 46% of respondents would use pedicabs if they were licensed in York.

Members considered the following options:

Option 1 – issue a hackney carriage licence to all pedicab applicants meeting the appropriate vehicle specifications, licensing conditions and other relevant matters.

Option 2 – as Option 1, but limit the number of licences issued to a maximum of ten.

Proposed conditions of licensing and codes of conduct for riders and operators of pedicabs were attached as Annexes 2-4 to the report. In response to questions from Members, Officers confirmed that:

- The suggested maximum of ten licences had been arrived at following consultation with the York Taxi Association and in view of the adverse effects in other cities of operating an unrestricted number of pedicabs;
- Pedicab riders / operators would be subject to the same medical checks as taxi drivers;
- It was expected that the pedicabs would operate within the boundary of the unitary authority, thus avoiding the risk of exhausting the riders.

RESOLVED: (i) That Option 2 be approved and that up to ten hackney carriage (pedicab) licences be issued within the City of York to applicants who meet the appropriate vehicle specification, licensing conditions and other relevant matters.¹

REASON: To give operators the chance to test the commercial viability of pedicabs in the City, within a properly regulated framework.

(ii) That Officers be asked to consider the possibility of using the taxi rank outside Lloyds Bank, Piccadilly, as a pedicab rank and, if they consider this a viable option, to make the necessary arrangements.²

REASON: This rank is little used by taxis and is in a suitable location for pedicabs.

Action Required

1. Issue up to 10 pedicab licenses, as per this resolution. KS
2. Consider the possible use of this taxi rank as a Pedicab rank. KS

33. REVISION OF PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE CONDITIONS

Members considered a report which proposed a timetable for the introduction of restrictions on vehicle colour, as agreed by the Committee on 4 January 2008, and for the introduction of vehicle emission standards for private hire vehicles. The report also examined the potential for encouraging lower carbon dioxide emissions from private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.

The Committee had already resolved that private hire vehicles should not be black in colour and that their licence conditions should be amended to include emission standards. Members were now asked to consider options in respect of these matters, in the light of the results of consultation with the private hire trade and results of the Halcrow study on hackney carriage provision, results of which were attached as Annexes 1 and 2 to the report. The options were:

a) **Colour Restriction**

Option 1 – not to apply the restriction retrospectively to the 49 private hire vehicles currently painted black. This would dilute the effect of the policy relating to hackney carriages, due to take effect from 1 June 2009, but would not place undue financial burden on vehicle owners.

Option 2 – not to re-license any private hire vehicle painted black after 31 October 2009. This was the proposal consulted on and would align the policy for private hire with that for hackney carriages.

Option 3 – not to re-license any private hire vehicle painted black after 31 October 2010. This was the recommended option, representing a reasonable balance between meeting the Council's objectives without placing excessively onerous financial pressures on vehicle owners.

b) **Emission Standards**

Option 1 – take no action – not recommended as it would mean failure to follow the Council's own strategy in the Local Transport Plan.

Option 2 – apply the same standard as for hackney carriages, in accordance with the timetable set out in paragraph 10 of the report. This was the proposal consulted on.

Option 3 – as Option 2, but with an extended period for compliance, as set out in paragraph 15. This was the recommended option as it would meet the Council's objectives and provide the trade with more time to comply.

c) **Carbon Dioxide Emissions**

Option 1 – take no action. Not recommended, as this would miss the chance to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in York.

Option 2 – amend the private hire and hackney carriage vehicle licence conditions to exempt vehicles that meet the current Euro standard for vehicle emissions from any vehicle age restrictions and to reduce their vehicle licence fees by 50%. This was the recommended option.

Option 3 – provide some other incentive to encourage the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles.

In response to the comments made on this item under Public Participation, Officers confirmed that the Council had no control over the emissions from buses and other public vehicles and that the Euro standards related to the standard to which a vehicle was constructed, not to any subsequent test. The Chair expressed his appreciation for the contribution that taxi firms had recently made to raising the standards of taxi services in the City.

RESOLVED: (i) That, in respect of vehicle colour, Option 3 be approved and that no private hire vehicle which is painted black be re-licensed after 31 October 2008, subject to legal clarification regarding the two wheelchair-accessible private hire vehicles licensed late in 2007, as raised under Public Participation.¹

REASON: Having regard to the consultation exercise, this option provides a reasonable balance between meeting the Council's objectives without placing too onerous a financial burden on vehicle owners, by providing a longer roll-out period than originally suggested.

(ii) That, in respect of emission standards, Option 3 be approved and that an extended period of compliance with the emission standards be applied, as set out in paragraph 15 of the report.²

REASON: This will meet the Council's objectives, respond to comments received through consultation and provide the trade with more time to comply, via the natural cycle of vehicle renewal.

(iii) That, in respect of carbon dioxide emissions, the introduction of low CO2 emitting hackney carriages and private hire vehicles be incentivised by changes to the vehicle licence conditions and licence fees structure as set out in paragraph 29 of the report.³

REASON: To meet Council priorities and strategies, as set out in the Corporate Strategy and the Local Transport Plan.

Action Required

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| 1. Clarify the position on these wheelchair-accessible vehicles, then apply the policy from 31/10/08. | KS |
| 2. Apply the new emission standards in accordance with the extended compliance period. | KS |
| 3. Amend the vehicle licence conditions and licence fee structure in accordance with Option 2. | KS |

I Gillies, Chair

[The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 2.55 pm].

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