
MEETING	TAXI LICENSING POLICY TASK GROUP
DATE	19 JANUARY 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS WATT (CHAIR), MERRETT AND VASSIE
IN ATTENDANCE	IAN TEMPEST – VISIT YORK

9. 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. No declarations were made.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

12. TAXI LICENSING POLICY REVIEW - INTERIM REPORT

Members received a report that presented information gathered in support of the review, including feedback on the consultation process that had recently been carried out.

The following additional information was tabled:

- Briefing note on the Duncombe Place taxi rank
- Data on estimated emissions from taxis in York
- Feedback from consultation exercise
- Summary of consultation findings

(i) Impact on Air Quality

Consideration was given to the data provided on emissions from taxis in York. It was noted that the data provided an overview of the age and fuel type of the current taxi fleet and that estimates had been made of the total emissions from the whole fleet, assuming each vehicle travelled a set distance.

Members noted that it would be possible to undertake a detailed study of taxi emissions in York, as detailed in paragraphs 22-26 of the report, and noted the financial costs that this would involve.

It was suggested that that there was a need to carry out more work in respect of air quality in general and that consideration should be given to longer-term ambitions as well as interim targets.

Members noted the comments that had been made by the District Judge following a statutory appeal against the council's conditions for Hackney Carriage Vehicles in respect of emissions. During the case the District Judge had indicated that a vehicle age policy in itself was inappropriate and that any policy should be emissions based.

Consideration was given to the information that had been provided on the Air Quality Strategy that had been introduced in London, as detailed in paragraphs 15 to 20 of the report. Members agreed that a recommendation should be made that the taxi related measures for improving air quality within the GLA Scheme should be implemented in York. It was suggested that a target implementation date of 2021 would enable time to investigate funding streams available to support the policy, including EU funding.

Discussion took place as to the necessary support systems that would need to be put in place. It was noted that it was intended to include proposals regarding the taxi trade within LTP3 and Members requested that they received more information on this issue.

Officers gave details of the database that was currently in place to record information on taxi vehicles. It was noted that a new IT system was to be introduced that would enable data on emissions to be recorded.

Suggested recommendations:

That, in order to reduce the emissions from taxis in the short to medium term, the following European standard should be required for replacement vehicles:

- *For petrol cars – Euro 4 petrol vehicle class*
- *For diesel cars – Euro 5 diesel vehicle class.*

That, in the case of new plates, Members acknowledged the need to increase the number of low emission vehicles and to meet the forthcoming quota to be set by the government for wheelchair accessible vehicles and they agreed that a hierarchy should be established to be applied to licence applications. No additional diesel cars should be added to York's hackney fleet.

That, recognising the need for a longer term vision for the city and its taxi fleet in relation to the council's Air Quality Strategy, the Task Group recommended the introduction of a zero tail pipe emissions

policy similar to the Mayor's Plan for London hackneys and PHVs by 2021.

(ii) Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

It was noted that officers were awaiting a Government announcement on the quota requirements for the number of wheelchair accessible taxis.

Suggested recommendation:

That the policy be amended to reflect the requirement to comply with government policy on wheelchair accessible taxis when this becomes available.

(iii) Meters

Consideration was given to the issue of meters and to the information provided in paragraphs 14-17 of the report.

Suggested recommendation:

That the council's policy be updated to include "A new specification will apply to taximeters i.e. the taximeter must comply with the Measuring Instruments (Taximeter) Regulations 2006 and must be of the calendar control type which is locked and sealed by and approved manufacturer and supplier and or installer. The meter should have the facility to print receipts. The specification will initially apply to new vehicle applications only and subsequently will apply to all existing vehicles, both hackney and private hire (where fitted) with effect from 1 April 2015".

(iv) Livery

Members agreed that the council's policy should *encourage* the taxi fleet to have black livery but they acknowledged that, in view of the legal ruling on this issue, this could be advisory only.

(v) Taxi Ranks

(a) Duncombe Place

Members considered the briefing note on the Duncombe Place taxi rank. It was noted that a number of measures had been put in place to address issues that had previously arisen regarding antisocial behaviour in the area. These had included a Designated Public Places Order in the Memorial Gardens (alcohol restriction), improving street lighting and cutting back bushes and shrubbery in the gardens. Since the introduction of the Designated Public Places Order in March 2007 incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour had reduced by 79%.

Members also noted that taxis can pick up passengers in any street and can be “flagged down” when not already booked. This meant that irrespective of the operation of a taxi rank in Duncombe Place if there were passengers waiting a taxi could lawfully stop and pick them up.

It was noted that Duncombe Place remained a popular rank at all times of day and that it served people leaving the theatre and late night city venues.

Suggested recommendation:

That, on a twelve-month trial basis, the Duncombe Place taxi rank revert to a 24hr operation.

(b) Other Ranks

Members considered whether there were other sites in the city which should have designated ranks. It was agreed that this issue should be taken into account when planning applications for major developments such as the community stadium, the new council offices or large retail outlets were considered.

Suggested recommendation:

That, as part of the planning application process for new public centres, consideration be given as to whether it would be appropriate to have designated bays/ranks for taxis.

(c) Raising Public Awareness of Taxi Ranks

The representative from Visit York requested that consideration be given to ensuring that the sites of taxi ranks were better publicised. He suggested that a map should be produced, indicating the sites of the ranks. The map should be made available on the council’s website, and hard copies provided to Visit York and other organisations.

Suggested recommendation

That information about the sites of taxi ranks in the city be better publicised.

(vi) Training for Taxi Drivers

The representative from Visit York gave details of the tourism course that they offered to taxi drivers. Taxi drivers were important ambassadors for the city and the training enabled them to be more knowledgeable about the history of the city. Around 100 drivers had already completed the course and the intention was to run the course again.

Members agreed that taxi drivers should be encouraged to attend the tourism course offered by Visit York.

(vii) Innovations

Members considered whether there were any innovative ways in which the licensed taxi and private fleet could enhance public transport provision both within the city and in rural communities, including the possibility of taxi buses.

Suggested Recommendation:

That the council be sympathetic towards the introduction of taxi buses for use in rural areas and should work with possible future providers to investigate how such services may be introduced.

- RESOLVED: (i) That a list of recommendations for inclusion in the draft final report be emailed to Members for consideration.
- (ii) That officers working on the LTP3 be requested to prepare a briefing note detailing the proposals in respect of taxi provision.

REASON: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and workplans.

Councillor J Watt, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.10 pm].