
Meeting	Gambling, Licensing & Regulatory Committee
Date	16 July 2018
Present	Councillors Lisle (Chair), Boyce, Hayes, Hunter, Mason, D Taylor and Wells
Apologies	Councillors Funnell, Cullwick, Douglas, Mercer, Pavlovic, Reid, Richardson and K Taylor

6. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

7. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak under the Council's public participation scheme. There had also been one written representation, which was circulated to the Committee.

Wendy Loveday, Chair of the York Private Hire Association, spoke in relation to the Taxi Licensing Knowledge test. She felt that the low pass rate was due to a lack of study by applicants, a lack of knowledge of the City and a lack of knowledge of taxi licensing legislation. She suggested people should revise from the booklet given out by taxi licensing.

Mike Palmer, a driver, spoke on unused ranks in the City. He felt that illuminated signs would highlight these ranks to the public and stop illegal pick ups from other, overused, ranks with large queues.

8. Unmet Demand Survey

Members considered a report containing the findings of a recent unmet demand survey relating to the provision of hackney carriage services in the council's area. The Committee were asked decide whether to maintain or review the existing policy on the issuing of licences.

The Head of Public Protection was in attendance to present the report and answer member questions, along with the Director of Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment (LVSA), who undertook the survey for the Council.

As a background to the report, the Head of Public Protection explained that in April 2012 there had been concerns that too many licences were being issued, given the economic climate at the time and on 20 October 2014 the Committee had decided a restriction should be placed on the number of Hackney Carriage licences issued. It was not considered best practice to restrict licences. Guidance issued by the DfT states it should be for the market to determine. However, Councils are able to restrict numbers if they can demonstrate there is no unmet demand.

The Director of LVSA explained to Members how the Unmet Demand Survey had been carried out.

In response to Member questions they stated that:

- The date the survey was carried out was to allow students to return to university as that had a significant impact on use. The fact it fell on the same weekend as a race meeting was coincidental;
- The rank at Toft Green was not well used as it was often used for staff parking;
- Work was being done with the York BID team on placing marshals at ranks to reduce levels of anti social behaviour. This had already improved behaviour at Duncombe Place and St Saviourgate;
- Drivers tend to focus on ranks where they are more likely to get a fare and customers go where they know they have a good chance of getting a taxi quickly;
- There was work to be done to improve some ranks;
- The taxi environment had changed significantly since 2011 with the emergence of apps and companies such as Uber;
- The fact that Station Taxis controlled the rank at the Station meant there were artificial figures in some ways and issuing more licences would not necessarily have an impact on the wait times at the station; and
- Most large taxi companies have now developed apps as people were now less likely to want to walk and look for a taxi.

During the debate Members made some of the following points:

- That the policy before 2011 had been correct and licences should go first to vehicles that were environmentally or friendly or accessible for disabled passengers;

- That there was now a two tier system in York, with Hackney licences being seen as very valuable; and
- The knowledge test was an important tool for recruiting high quality drivers

Some Members felt that the report highlighted there was unmet demand and so, as per best practice, it should be left for the market to decide. Conversely other Members felt that the survey did little to suggest unmet demand in the City and that, in any case, the station rank skewed the figures and was out of the Council's control.

Resolved: That, in accordance with Option 2 of the report, Officers review the existing policy on the issue of hackney carriage vehicle licences and report back to Members after consultation with the trade and taxi users.

Reason: To consider the benefits and disadvantages of setting quantity restrictions.

, Chair

[The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.10 pm].

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