
Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

16th March 2009

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Review of night-time taxi rank provision

Summary

1. This report presents, to the Executive Members and Panel members, a petition received by the council in relation to the hours of operation of the Duncombe Place taxi rank and seeks direction as to any action required. It further requests approval to consult on the creation of additional night time ranking provision in the city centre.

Background

2. There are currently 173 hackney carriages (taxis) operating in the City. These vehicles operate, in the main, from taxi ranks but maybe hailed on the street or pre-booked.
3. There are 28 full time city centre ranking places and 8 part time ranks operating in the evening or late night providing an additional 33 places in the city centre. Details at Annex 1
4. The creation, dissolution or alteration to taxi ranks is governed by legislation. There is a statutory requirement to obtain consent of the highway authority, consult with the police and publish public notice in the local press. Any objections must be considered before any action is initiated.

Duncombe Place Rank

5. This rank provides ranking for 8 cars. It is located on the south side of the road as indicated on the plan attached at Annex 2.
6. In February 2007 the hours of operation of this rank were reduced from 24 hrs to 07.30 – 22.00. This reduction resulted from complaints being received from the Dean Court Hotel and local residents about late night disturbance from those waiting in the taxi queue.
7. On the 20th January 2009 a petition was received signed by 175 members of the local taxi trade. The petition requests that this rank reverts back to a 24 hr operation.

8. The local member of parliament has also been contacted by a driver and has written to the Director of Neighbourhood Services, letter attached at Annex 3

Consultation

9. As a result of the receipt of the petition, officers wrote to the Police, the manager of the Dean Court Hotel and the Management Committee representing local residents seeking their views on the proposals made by the taxi trade. Replies have been received from the hotel and residents and are attached at Annexes 4&5.
10. The views of the York Taxi Association have also been sought and their response is at Annex 6

Other Night time rank provision

11. It maybe helpful to Members to look at other night time rank provision in addition to considering the future of the Duncombe Place rank.
12. The letter from the York Taxi Association has made certain suggestions with respect to the formation of additional ranking in St Sampsons Square, in Lendal, in Station Rise and to make alterations to the ranks in Rougier Street, Exhibition Square and outside the nightclubs. The additional ranking in St Sampson's Square was also suggested by transport consultants, Halcrow, in their report which was considered by the Licensing and Regulatory Committee in May 2008 when a decision was taken to increase the size of the taxi fleet.

Options

Duncombe Place Rank

13. Option 1 Retain the existing operating hours i.e. 07.30 – 22 00hours
14. Option 2 Instigate the statutory procedure to cause this rank to revert to a 24 hour operation
15. Option 3 Instigate the statutory procedure to alter the hours of operation of the rank to some other time period.

Other nighttime ranks

16. Option 4 Take no further action
17. Option 5 Instruct officers to look at the feasibility of the proposals put forward by the York Taxi Association for the creation of, and alterations to, other night time taxi ranks; and, where feasible, consult upon those proposals prior to implementation. Any objections to be reported back to the Executive members.
18. Option 6 Instruct officers to draw up proposals for, and consult upon, potential alternative late night rank locations.

Analysis

Duncombe Place

- 19 This is a popular rank in the city which is regarded as less rowdy than some. In practice there is difficulty in closing a rank at any specific time when customers are queuing. Enforcement is always difficult in so far as the rank may be closed i.e. cars cannot rank up but there is nothing to stop passengers queuing and a passing taxi stopping to pick them up. This is what currently happens.
- 20 Over the past two years, following complaints of nuisance and anti social behaviour in the area, a raft of improvements have been introduced. The street lighting has been improved, consumption of alcohol controlled through a Designated Public Places Order, CCTV coverage has been upgraded, parking restrictions introduced and the shrubbery in the memorial gardens cut back. This is in addition to the reduced operating hours of the taxi rank.
- 21 Should it be decided to maintain the limited opening of the rank then the provision of additional alternative ranking space will alleviate the pressure on this rank reducing the temptation by drivers and passengers to exceed the time restriction.

Other Late Night Ranks

- 22 An important aspect of providing a safe night time economy is to disperse people away from the city centre as quickly as possible after they have left premises. Nightsafe, a task group of the Crime Reduction Partnership, set up to reduce alcohol related violent crime in the city centre, sees the dispersal of night-time time visitors from the city centre as a key intervention in achieving this objective. Taxis and private hire vehicles take the brunt of this responsibility when bus services cease.
- 23 It is preferable, in public order terms, to have shorter queues as possible at ranks. A short queue will encourage people to wait for and use a taxi rather than walking home through residential areas with the potential to cause disturbance. The shorter the queue the less potential for friction to occur between those waiting. More ranks with shorter queues are preferable to fewer larger ranks.
- 24 A key feature of our city is the encouragement of city centre living. It is essential to have full regard to residents and local businesses when considering the location of activities that may give rise to late night disturbance. This should however be seen in balance with the needs of our prosperous night time economy.
- 25 In considering additional rank spaces, regard should be had to the ongoing work on the City Centre Area Action Plan, which is part of the Local Development Framework, that could ultimately impact on the position of taxi ranks. As any outcome of this process is some way off it maybe considered that the current proposals should proceed and any alterations that result from the Action Plan be made at a later date.

Corporate Priorities

- 26 The provision of adequate late night taxi ranks will encourage the use of public transport and potentially make the city safer.

Implications

- 27 **Financial:** None – the provision of taxi ranks is a cost that is recoverable through taxi licence fees.

Human Resources: (HR) None

Equalities: None

Legal: None providing statutory processes are adhered to

Crime and Disorder: Nightsafe comments : see paragraph 21

Information Technology: (IT) None

Property: None

Risk Management

- 28 There is no risk to the council in these decisions providing the necessary legal processes are adhered to and due regard given to any comments received as a result of the statutory consultation

Recommendations

- 29 That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to

- 1) Approve Option 1, to take no action at the present time with respect to the Duncombe Place taxi rank operational hours.

Reason: To protect the residents and guests at the hotel from late night disturbance

- 2) Approve Option 5 to investigate improvements to the late night taxi rank provision as suggested by the York Taxi Association.

Reason: To reduce the dependence on the Duncombe Place rank and to improve the dispersal of persons from the city centre during night time hours

Contact Details

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Report Approved Date 24/02/09

Wards Affected: Guildhall and Micklegate

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex 1: Details of existing taxi ranks

Annex 2: Plan of taxi rank at Duncombe Place

Annex 3: Letter from Hugh Bayley, MP City of York

Annex 4: Letter from Dean Court Hotel

Annex 5: Letter from Duncombe Place Management Committee

Annex 6: Letter from York Taxi Association