
Meeting of the Taxi Licensing Review Task Group 16 February 2011

Taxi Licensing Policy Review - Final Report

Purpose of Report

1. This final report presents information gathered in support of the review and the resulting recommendations.

Chairs Foreword

2. The Working Group was presented with a number of challenging objectives and reporting timeframe. Nevertheless, with able support from council officers, they were quickly able to understand the workings of the Hackney and Private Hire businesses and bring fresh - innovative - thinking to bear on the various issues. In particular, the Working Group saw that deregulation would not be desirable for York if the City was to maintain a quality Hackney trade into the future that best served the customers, the trade and the city.
3. Of greatest relevance, the Working Group saw the need to adopt a bold vision for future vehicle provision. Therefore, it recommended aiming for zero tailpipe emissions by 2021 and 'incentivising' the introduction of 'eco-friendly' vehicles in the interim period.
4. Whilst implementing the recommendations may be a challenge in itself, the Council must pursue a 'bold' vision if it is to be at the forefront in supporting Taxi and Private Hire provision that meets both the service and environmental needs of York's citizens and visitors.

Background

5. This topic was registered by Councillor Gillies as Chair of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee, following a number of recent meetings where the committee made decisions based on the council's current Taxi Licensing Policy, which highlighted aspects of the policy open to interpretation. The Licensing & Regulatory Committee unanimously

agreed that the policy was in need of review to ensure it was robust and fit for purpose.

6. In September 2010, the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a feasibility report on the proposed topic informing them that nationally, each authority sets its own policy based on its own specific requirements. Therefore little would be gained by looking in detail at the Taxi Licensing Policies in place elsewhere. Instead it was proposed that the review would be better informed if it were to focus on the Department for Transport's 'Best Practice Guidance for Taxi & Private Hire Licensing'. This authority's guidance for applicants contains the conditions currently applied to vehicle and driver licences.
7. In accordance with the decision of members of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee in May 2008, the committee were informed that a further survey of unmet demand is required in spring 2011 with a view to reviewing the restriction policy on hackney carriage numbers. Officers welcomed this scrutiny review as a way of assisting with their revision of the policy within that timeframe.
8. With that in mind, the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a Task Group to carry out this review on their behalf and set a timeframe for the review which would enable the findings to be fed into the Licensing Unit's policy review process. They requested that a draft final report be brought back to them for their consideration at their meeting in March 2011. They also agreed the following remit for the review:

Aim

To ensure the council has an up to date Taxi Licensing Policy which is robust and fit for purpose.

Key Objectives

- i. To consider the future allocation of hackney carriage vehicle licences having regard to the Department for Transport's Best Practice Guidance for Taxi & Private Hire Licensing, in meeting the needs of all potential members of the travelling public
- ii. To examine the provision and usage of taxi ranks in the city
- iii. To examine conditions attached to vehicle licences, in particular with regard to accessibility, emissions, vehicle colour and window tinting

- iv. To look at innovative ways in which the licensed taxi and private fleet may enhance the public transport provision both within the city and in rural communities

Review Workplan

9. At a meeting held on 15 November 2010, the Task Group met for the first time and agreed the following workplan for their review:

| Meeting Dates | Workplan |
|---|--|
| <u>Meeting 1</u> 15 November 2010 5:30pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider scoping report containing information gathered to date and suggested methods for carrying out the review • Receive presentation on 'Overview of CYC Licensing Policy' • Agree workplan and future meeting dates |
| <u>Meeting 2</u> 15 December 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive interim report presenting information relating to the review objectives • Identify relevant consultees and a suitable consultation method |
| <u>Meeting 3</u> 19 January 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive interim report presenting any additional information required and consider responses from consultation process • Identify suitable recommendations |
| <u>Meeting 4</u> 16 February 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider draft final report and agree recommendations |
| 1 March 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of final report to Community Safety O & S Committee |

Consultation

10. The Head of Licensing, Bereavement and Registry Services and officers from CYC Licensing Unit supported the work of the Task Group.
11. At the meeting in December 2010 the Task Group agreed to issue a questionnaire to the following relevant parties, inviting them to participate in a consultation exercise:

- Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licence Proprietors
 - Taxi and Private Hire Drivers
 - Association of York Taxi Drivers
 - Private Hire Operators
(The above are represented by 3 trade organisations)
 - Applicants on hackney vehicle licence waiting list
 - Access Groups
 - CYC Highways officers
 - CYC Licensing Unit officers
 - CYC Legal officers
 - North Yorkshire Police
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - East Coast Railways
 - Visit York
 - The Garrett Residents Association
 - Dean Court Hotel
12. The questionnaire was drafted and 40 copies were sent out mid December with a closing date of 19 January 2011. 10 responses were received (25% return). In addition, the questionnaire was made available via the council's online consultation facility, generating a further 8 responses. A summary of all the responses is provided at Annex A.

Objective (i) - To consider the future allocation of hackney carriage vehicle licences having regard to the Department for Transport's Best Practice Guidance for Taxi & Private Hire Licensing, in meeting the needs of all potential members of the travelling public

13. At the meetings in December 2010 and January 2011, the Task Group received information in support of the objectives of the review, and comparisons were drawn with other cities of similar size and type. The comparable cities used and referred to were Oxford, Chester, Cambridge, Nottingham and Brighton & Hove, as these are the cities generally used by Transport Planning as suitable comparators.

Information Gathered

14. Number of Hackney carriages per population

| Authority | Population | Restricted? | No. Hackney Carriages | Ratio |
|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Chester | 120,000 | De restricted | 130 | 1/923 |
| Cambridge | 121,000 | De restricted | 303 | 1/399 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---------|------------|-----|--------|
| Oxford | 149,000 | Restricted | 107 | 1/1393 |
| YORK | 191,000 | Restricted | 178 | 1/1073 |
| Brighton & Hove | 256,000 | Restricted | 520 | 1/492 |
| Nottingham | 301,000 | Restricted | 411 | 1/732 |

15. The total number of Licensing Authorities in England & Wales is 343. As of November 2010, This total can be broken down to 256 (74.64%) that do not restrict hackney carriage numbers or have voted to remove restrictions at a future date, and 87 (25.36%) that do restrict hackney carriage numbers.
16. Over the years a number of Licensing Authorities (68) who originally restricted their number of hackney carriages have since removed or given a firm commitment to remove licensing restrictions. Of those, many moved from quantity control to quality control on hackneys as they tried to raise standards and increase their number of wheel chair assessable vehicles.
17. Following a policy review of quantity control by 151 Local Authorities (LAs) in 2004, 67 chose to de-regulate. Following 5 years of de-regulation, this number reduced to 63 when 4 of those LAs chose to change their policy back from that of 'unrestricted' to 'restricted' for the following reasons:
- Cardiff
- Hackney numbers rose by 75% from 480 in 2004/5 to 840 in 2008/9
 - Huge numbers of licenses led to a dip in the standards of taxi drivers
 - Sheer numbers of taxis led to what they dubbed as chaotic scenes at official ranks too many taxis waiting - not enough rank spaces etc
 - Police reported illegal ranks springing up around the city hot spots causing crime and disorder
- Birmingham
- Hackney numbers rose from 770 licenses in 1997 to 1405 in 2008
 - Research found ample supply of vehicles
 - At less busy times there was an over supply of taxis resulting in congestion at ranks
 - Propose to reduce number of cabs and introduce tougher quantity controls.
- Sheffield
- Introduced re-restriction in 2008 following pressure

from the trade

- Research concluded over saturation of the market.
- To many licensed vehicles for too few jobs

Derbyshire
Dales

- Matlock re-restricted in 2008
- Independent report on taxi licensing recommended restricting the number of hackney carriages serving Derby Dales
- Currently 78 licensed vehicles.

18. In each of the above cases the Task Group noted that, the Licensing Authorities had found de-regulation had resulted in an over supply of hackneys and an increase in congestion and opportunities for crime and disorder.

Analysis

19. De-regulation – Benefits & Disadvantages for York

The Task Group considered the benefits and disadvantages of restricting hackney carriage numbers in York:

Benefits

- Council not involved in commercial market regulation
- Increases proportion of accessible vehicles
- More accountability with fewer rented vehicles
- Meets DfT objectives
- All can obtain licence / no waiting list
- No disputes over vehicle ownership
- More vehicles for customers
- No further costly surveys required

Disadvantages

- Initial disruption to existing trading patterns
- May lead to additional traffic congestion and pressure on ranks
- Overprovision may lead to deterioration of standards
- Loss of investment value for those who bought a licensed vehicle (Value up to £40k)

Recommendations For Objective (i)

20. In regard to the first objective of this review and in light of the evidence shown in paragraphs 14, 20 & 21 of this report, the Task Group agreed to recommend:

- i. Not to introduce deregulation. Future increases in the number of taxi licenses to be subject to the findings from future unmet demand surveys and the forthcoming quota to be set by the Government for wheelchair accessible vehicles. Notwithstanding this, in an effort to introduce/increase the number of environmentally friendly vehicles into the city's taxi fleet, two additional licences to be made available to applicants with a hybrid or electric vehicle every 6 months.

Objective (ii) - To examine the provision and usage of taxi ranks in the city

21. In December 2010, the Task Group received national comparator information on the number of ranks & number of spaces on ranks in cities of similar size and type:

| Authority | No. of Hackneys | Rank Spaces | Ratio |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| Oxford | 107 | 17+6 at railway station | 1/ 4.7 |
| Chester | 130 | 90 | 1/1.4 |
| YORK | 178 | Full time 34 + station 20 Inc part time 87 | 1/ 3.3 1/1.3 |
| Cambridge | 303 | Full time 21 + 25 at station Inc. Part time 13 | 1/6.6 1/5.14 |
| Nottingham | 411 | 200 (unknown if station included) | 1/ 2.1 |
| Brighton & Hove | 520 | 58 (unknown if station included) | 1/ 9 |

22. The Task Group also received comprehensive information on the location and usage of hackney carriage ranks in York:

| Full-time Ranks | Spaces | Part-time Ranks | Spaces |
|---------------------------|--------|--|--------|
| Clifton Moor Cinema | 3 | Clifford Street (for Gallery Nightclub) | 4 |
| Haxby | 2 | Clifford Street (opp. Gallery Nightclub) | 4 |
| Queen Street | 4 | Micklegate (for Ziggys Nightclub) | 3 |
| Tower Street | 4 | Rougier Street 10.30pm – 6am | 3 |
| The Crescent (Blossom St) | 1 | Toft Green (for Tru Nightclub) | 4 |

| | | | |
|--|----|----------------------------------|----|
| St. Leonard's Place | 4 | Duncombe Place 7.30am – 10pm | 8 |
| St. Saviourgate – Rank A | 12 | St. Sampson's Square 8pm – 6am | 8 |
| St. Saviourgate – Rank B (feeder rank) | 4 | York Racecourse (Race Days only) | 12 |
| | | Exhibition Square 8pm – 6am | 3 |
| | | Piccadilly – 11am – 6am | 4 |

23. Usage of ranks and waiting times

The following table shows information from February/March 2008 (provided by Halcrow) detailing the average delay in minutes at ranks and the level of demand

| Rank | Passenger Departures | Taxi Departures | Average Passenger Delay | Average Taxi Delay |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Clifford St (Gallery) | 4,387 | 1,880 | 1.07 | 3.20 |
| Clifford St (Opp Gallery) | 2,700 | 1,207 | 0.84 | 1.57 |
| Railway Station | 7,679 | 5,293 | 3.80** | 7.46 |
| St Saviourgate | 5,681 | 3,509 | 2.55 | 5.86 |
| Tower Street | 0 | 18 | 0.00 | 5.00 |
| Duncombe Place | 1,028 | 594 | 2.28 | 5.68 |
| St Leonard's Place | 15 | 15 | 0.00 | 15.00 |
| Piccadilly | 5* | 0 | 2.50 | 0.00 |
| Rougier Street | 1,832 | 932 | 12.32 | 1.69 |
| Micklegate | 180 | 72 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Total | 23,685 | 13,519 | 3.21 | 5.42 |

* - At Piccadilly, the 5 passengers left the rank without obtaining a taxi.

** - At the Railway Station, the figure of 3.80 has been amended to reflect the poor throughput of taxis at the Railway Station rank. It is recognized that passengers are waiting longer for a vehicle (4.17 mins) but this is not as a result of the restricted policy, more to do with the traffic management layout at York Railway Station.

24. The table below shows totals from February/March 2009 for comparison purposes:

| Rank | Passenger Departures | Cab Departures | Average Passenger Delay | Average Cab Delay |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Clifford St (Gallery) | 1,127 | 605 | 0.84 | 1.46 |
| Railway Station | 4,801 | 2,988 | 0.94 | 7.51 |
| St Saviourgate | 3,181 | 2,432 | 0.70 | 8.45 |
| Rougier Street | 2,102 | 1,170 | 0.75 | 5.25 |
| 2009 Totals | 11,211 | 7,195 | 0.83 | 6.95 |
| Equiv ranks 2008 | 19,758 | 11,613 | 3.61 | 5.82 |

Analysis

25. The Task Group acknowledged that ranks at railway stations are difficult to compare nationally as many stations have dedicated parking for hackneys waiting to go onto the rank ie 'feeder ranks'. Ranks are often on land owned by railway companies who often introduce permit systems to limit the number of taxis allowed to use those ranks. This is true in York where 117 permits are issued. In York, vehicles can also wait in the overspill car park.
26. Raising Public Awareness of Little Used Ranks
The Task Group recognised that the trade would need to increase their level of service at those ranks that were under used, for the public to have the confidence to stand at them. Officers confirmed they plan to look at how best to raise public awareness of little-used ranks in the city centre e.g. Piccadilly, Tower St and Queen St.
27. Duncombe Place
The Task Group queried the ongoing issues around the use of the rank at Duncombe Place and received a briefing note from officers on the history surrounding its use – see Annex B.
28. The Task Group acknowledged the council's efforts to improve the area adjacent to the rank location through the introduction of the Designated Public Places Order in March 2007, and the improvements to street lighting etc around the boar War memorial gardens. They also noted there was little evidence to substantiate that the use of the rank gives rise to noise disturbance. Finally, they recognised that as a hackney carriage can pick up passengers in any street and can be "flagged down" when not already booked, irrespective of the operation of the taxi rank in Duncombe Place, if there are passengers waiting a taxi can

lawfully stop and pick them up. As the public continue to go the site of the rank at Duncombe Place, hackneys carriages continue to cruise in that area.

Recommendations – Objective (ii)

29. In regard to the second objective of this review, the Task Group agreed to recommend:
 - ii. CYC Planning Dept to encourage the siting of new/additional taxi ranks adjacent to major new developments e.g. outside the new stadium or near the new council offices or major retail centres / supermarkets
 - iii. CYC to produce a map showing York's taxi ranks indicating times of use and incorporated into other local maps, to raise public awareness of little-used ranks in the city centre. Map to be made available on CYC website and hard copies to be provided to relevant external parties e.g. Visit York
 - iv. For a 12 month trial period, the rank at Duncombe Place to be made available for use on a full time basis.

Objective (iii) - To examine the conditions attached to taxi licences, in particular with regard to accessibility, emissions, vehicle colour and window tinting

Information Gathered

30. Accessibility
The Task Group were informed that officers are currently awaiting a Government announcement on the quota requirements for the number of wheelchair accessible taxis etc. York currently has 41 wheelchair accessible taxis (with a further 2 in the next 3 months) The new government quota is expected to be higher than this.
31. Understanding the Effects of Taxi Emissions on Air Quality
Emissions from a vehicle in terms of g/km depend on its age and the size and type of its engine. The main pollutants are PM10, NOx and CO2. The quantity of emissions over a period of time depends on how far the vehicle travels in a set period and the type of journey i.e. urban, motorway etc.

32. The Task Group received detailed information on a new Air Quality Strategy that has recently been introduced in London. Through a brand new programme of investment, this new strategy seeks to address the particulate air quality problems currently experienced in London and will:
- encourage the uptake of electric vehicles by enabling Londoners to sign up to Source London, a brand new electric vehicle membership scheme tailored to make electric driving an easier choice.
 - convert London's bus fleet to hybrid or low emission and;
 - clean up London's taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) fleet by promoting the use of newer, cleaner vehicles
33. From spring this year, the Greater London Authority (GLA) intends to use the taxi and PHV licensing regime to remove the oldest vehicles from the fleet by introducing age limits for these vehicles. From 2012, a rolling 15 year age limit will be set for hackneys so that no hackney over 15 years old will be licensed to operate in London unless by a special exemption. For PHVs, a ten year rolling age limit will be introduced from 2012. This reflects the differential values of the vehicles used for private hire and hackneys and the broader structures and licensing requirements of the two industries.
34. In addition, all new hackneys entering the fleet will be required to meet the Euro 5 emissions standard from 2012. However, this Euro 5 diesel policy will only work for London in the short term as they only provide emission reduction in terms of particulate, and could make the NOx situation worse. In the longer term London will have to address the emissions of NOx as well. To do this, new PHVs entering the fleet from 2012 will be required to meet the Euro 4 standard and be five years old or newer, and the London Authority aim to work with the vehicle manufacturing industry to develop a vehicle suitable for use as a PHV with a 60 per cent improvement in fuel economy by 2015 (based on current levels), and a vehicle with zero tail pipe emission by 2020. The introduction of such vehicles will deliver significant air quality benefits.
35. The GLA will also amend the annual taxi inspection regime from its current form of one combined mechanical and licensing inspection to two MOTs per year, to ensure that taxis are operating as efficiently and cleanly as possible. This will be complemented by a requirement for all new taxi drivers to undertake an eco-driving course before becoming licensed drivers, which can reduce emissions and help drivers use their vehicles more economically, at no cost to themselves.

36. Finally, the GLA will also seek to eliminate situations where taxi drivers are effectively forced to keep engines running – for example at taxi ranks at stations and while empty running. They plan to achieve this by facilitating additional taxi ranks, suspending stopping and waiting restrictions where possible and encouraging new technologies to enable taxi sharing and electronic hailing.
37. Alternative Technologies
There are a variety of promising propulsion and power technologies which could see hybrid, plug-in electric, full-electric and fuel cell taxis on the roads in the future. As part of the GLA scheme, it is intended to establish a financial incentive that will offer a reduction on the purchase price of qualifying vehicles to taxi drivers. It will be made available to drivers for a limited time and for a pre-defined number of new vehicles meeting strict environmental requirements.
38. Taxi Emissions in York
Carbon fuelled engines represent the overwhelming majority of current road vehicles. They produce both CO₂ (greenhouse gas) and polluting emissions, and the pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide(NO₂) in particular. They represent a significant source of CO₂ albeit by no means the largest share, but the single most important source of the latter.
39. There are currently six technical breach areas in York's Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), where levels of nitrogen dioxide caused mainly by vehicle exhaust emissions, exceed the annual objective. These traffic related breaches, reflect the particular circumstances in York i.e. the narrow enclosed central routes. And, taxis and buses with their many repeat journeys, have a more significant impact than other vehicles. In an effort to improve air quality, LTP2 contained an Air Quality Action Plan to limit the average nitrogen dioxide concentrations to 30µg/m³ by 2011. It was expected that if the plan was implemented as recommended within the AQMA, the annual average nitrogen dioxide objective would have been met in most locations by 2011, although there would still be some exceedances in the technical breach areas. However, subsequent monitoring has shown worsened levels in the last three years, which indicates that the predicted reductions were due mainly to cleaner vehicle technology and not LTP2 measures.
40. To undertake a detailed study of emissions from York taxis, officers would need to know as a minimum, vehicle ages, fuel types and have an estimation of mileage over a set period e.g. day, week, year etc - ideally per vehicle, but failing that an 'average' for a taxi in York. Unfortunately for this review, very little information is currently held

electronically about hackney carriages and PHVs in York. What is available is held in an access database that doesn't lend itself to detailed investigation. For example, there is no information on the access database about vehicle fuel type or mileages.

41. However, officers were able to provide a broad brush estimate of emissions from York's taxi fleet based on all vehicles in the fleet doing a set amount of mileage per year (this was done for various levels of mileage). They also provided an estimate of emissions of NO_x and CO₂ in g/km for each of the different classes of vehicle based on Euro standard and fuel type – see Annex C. They also received information on the cost of different types of low emission vehicles and their operating costs.
42. Introduction of Low Emission Zone in York
At the present time efforts to reduce emissions in York are being focused on the development of a Low Emission Strategy (LES) which uses incentives to encourage the uptake of cleaner vehicles and technology. At the present time there are no plans to introduce a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) for all vehicles, including taxis. As has already been outlined above, improving the Euro standard of a diesel vehicle does not necessarily lead to a reduction in nitrogen dioxide concentrations (see paragraph 31 above).
43. One option would be to 'enforce' the uptake of electric / hybrid and gas fuelled vehicles within the taxi (and general vehicle fleet) by the use of Low Emission Zone (LEZ) style controls requiring the use of these vehicle types, but this would not be possible until hybrid vehicles became more accessible and affordable to the general population.
44. In officers view, in the short term the council's emphasis should be on doing what it can to promote the use of hybrid, and to a lesser extent electric vehicles. This may need to involve some lobbying of government to try and secure financial assistance for the purchase of these types of vehicles by taxi drivers and the provision of as many local incentives as possible.
45. Increased Personal Safety
In 2008, in an effort to promote the protection and safety of the public and taxi drivers, the authority introduced:
 - Approved installation of driver shields
 - Amended conditions of tinted windows

- Adoption of DfT guidance on driver safety
- Review of crime statistics every 3 months – crime against taxi drivers example attached
- Approved installation of CCTV camera to licensed vehicles subject to certain criteria as outlined below:

‘Personal safety – when fitted, a camera lens and equipment should present no impact danger to passengers

- *The quality of recorded images should be of sufficient quality during all lighting conditions to continually demonstrate their strong deterrent value*
- *Passengers should be aware that they are being recorded. The vehicle will carry appropriate signs, approved by the council, informing the public that camera surveillance is active in the vehicle*
- *Encryption of images stored. The images contained in the recording device may only be downloaded by an authorised officer of the council or police officer. The manufacturer will supply the council with de-encryption software free of charge.*
- *Appropriate activation device*
- *The recording system and memory card or other image memory recording system will be securely stored within the vehicle and away from public access’*

Analysis

46. In regard to taxi emissions, having acknowledged that air quality is an issue that affects all cities and towns across the country, and in particular, the worsening problem in York, the Task Group agreed that those who contribute more to the problem i.e. buses, taxis and vans - should be expected to do more to provide the solution.
47. The Task Group considered the measures contained within the Greater London Authority’s new Air Quality Strategy. In particular, they noted the planned introduction from 2012 of age limits for hackneys (15 yrs) and PHVs (10 yrs). The Task Group agreed this was a sensible approach to the issue of emissions, but officers informed them of a recent court decision in York in which the Judge upheld the council’s policy on emissions but not our policy on having an age limit for the taxi fleet.

48. The Task Group also noted that whilst some low emission vehicles might offer up some CO₂ savings, they were unlikely to help with the NO₂ issue in York because there is emerging evidence that modern diesel engines contribute more nitrogen dioxide out of the rear of the vehicle than older versions did. This is as a direct result of the engine technology that has been put in place to try and control particulate emissions. They also recognised the trade off between NO₂ and particulate, as petrol vehicles produce less NO₂ than diesel but are less efficient, so increase CO₂ emissions. They therefore agreed that one way to reduce NO₂ emissions in the city centre would be to encourage an increase in the number of hybrid /electric vehicles in use as hackneys / PHVs.
49. In regard to the issue of reducing emissions and increasing accessibility, the Task Group considered how best to achieve the forthcoming quota requirements for wheelchair accessible taxis and agreed it would be necessary to find ways of increasing applications from new drivers with suitable vehicles. However, an examination of the market revealed that, currently, there are no electric, hybrid or petrol wheelchair accessible vehicles on the market. LTI (the manufacturer of London Taxis) does not produce a petrol wheel chair accessible vehicle. However, they plan to release a new Euro 5 diesel vehicle in 2012. Similarly, all of the vehicles supplied by Cab Direct (the leading supplier of taxis in the UK) are diesel. They have stated that the only way to get a petrol one is by specific request at a cost from the manufacturer. The reason for this, is that their vehicles are shipped all over the world, diesel engines last longer and are more economical etc, and diesel throughout the world is cheaper than petrol (apart from in the UK). However, they have said that new more environmentally-friendly emission diesel engines will be available later this year. Members were also supportive of the introduction of an Eco-driving course for all new drivers to undertake before being issued with a taxi drivers licence. It was recognised that the authority may need to facilitate the provision of this course.
50. The Task group recognised that the key to the issue of reducing emissions and increasing accessibility would be the Government's guidelines on the percentage of wheelchair accessible taxis we should have in our fleet. They agreed therefore that the council should give priority to electric or hybrid vehicles, and not accept non wheelchair accessible diesel vehicles.
51. In regard to charging points, the Task Group queried whether there were any plans for the provision of these across the city within the

council's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) – see extract from LTP3 showing the included measures and their implementation plan at Annex D. The Task Group agreed that the council would need to be flexible in its introduction of new charging points to ensure the infrastructure is in place to encourage and support a cleaner taxi fleet, in line with the recommendations arising from this review.

52. Finally, in regard to personal safety, having considered the measures previously introduced by the Authority i.e. drivers shields, tinted windows etc, the Task Group agreed those measures were acceptable and no amendments to the policy were required.

Recommendations – Objective (iii)

53. In regard to the third objective of this review, the Task Group agreed to recommend that for the short to medium term :
- v. To reduce the emissions from hackneys and PHVs, the following European standards only to be accepted for replacement vehicles, as from 1 June 2012 for hackneys and 1 November 2012 for PHVs.
 - For petrol cars – Euro 4 petrol vehicle class
 - For diesel cars – Euro 5 diesel vehicle class
 - vi. The number of low emission vehicles and to meet the forthcoming quota to be set by the government for wheelchair accessible vehicles, a hierarchy should be applied to issuing new licences in priority order as follows:
 - those applicants providing an electric car
 - those applicants providing a hybrid car or euro 3 standard gas fuelled car
 - those applicants providing a wheelchair accessible diesel car
 - those applicants providing a petrol car
 - vii. No additional hackney carriage vehicle licences will be issued to 'non wheelchair accessible' diesel cars.
 - viii. Where there are a number of applicants with cars of the same type (i.e. types shown above) the order they are issued plates should be based on the length of time they have been on the waiting list in line with the council's current policy.

- ix. CYC Taxi Licensing Unit to monitor emissions and the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles in York's taxi fleet (Hackneys and PHVs) by revising their annual inspection regime to ensure the gathering and recording of the relevant information, within the new Licensing Unit computer system (once its commissioned)
 - x. Introduce as soon as is practicable a requirement for new taxi drivers to undertake an Eco-driving course prior to the issue of a taxi licence.
 - xi. Support for the council's current policy in regard to livery of the city's taxi fleet, but in the light of the court judgement, it be made advisory.
54. Finally, the Task Group recognised the need for a longer term vision for the city and its taxi fleet in relation to the council's Air Quality Strategy, and the need for the market to develop in terms of low emission, and wheelchair accessible vehicles. They therefore agreed to recommend:
- xii. Subject to the adequate progression with new technologies making the application practical, and the introduction of vehicle charging points as shown in the implementation plan at Annex D to this final report, introduce a zero tail pipe emissions policy similar to the Mayor's plan for London for hackneys and PHVs by 2021.

Objective (iv) - To look at innovative ways in which the licensed taxi and private fleet may enhance the public transport provision both within the city and in rural communities

Information Gathered

55. Types of Meters In Use In York
At the present time whilst it is a requirement for all hackney carriages to be fitted with a meter to calculate the journey fare, there is no specification in relation to the meter itself. However, following the issue of a European Measuring Instrument Directive, new regulations were introduced in 2006 for the protection of the public. The Measuring Instrument (Taximeters) Regulations 2006 provide standards and specifications that manufacturers have to meet for taximeters produced after 30 October 2006.
56. Some meters can be calendar controlled and locked and sealed by the manufacturers/suppliers so that tariff rates change automatically and

cannot be tampered with manually by a driver. Other meters can be manually controlled by a driver to change between tariff rates i.e. from tariff 1 to tariff 2. This can and has led to complaints of over charging by some drivers who set an inappropriate tariff rate for either time of day or the day itself e.g. Christmas Bank Holidays, Races. In addition, some private hire firms have introduced meters connect to GPS mapping.

57. Issuing of Receipts & Alternative Payment Methods

York's current Taxi Licensing Policy states that all drivers whether hackney or private hire will issue receipts on request. These invariably are hand written. However, technology does exist for receipts to be issued directly from a printer on a meter. This gives clear accountability and would greatly assist in reducing overcharging. It would however be an additional cost to the driver or vehicle owner. It should be noted that not all private hire vehicles are fitted with a meter and some companies operate off mileage charts.

58. In addition, the council places no restriction on drivers installing debit or credit card readers in their vehicles but does request that customers are made aware of any surcharges imposed for paying through this route.

59. Finally, the Task Group met with a representative from Visit York who gave feedback on visitors perspectives on York's taxi fleet. They specifically requested that a map showing the location of taxi ranks be produced so that they can make it available to visitors via the Visitor Information Centre and their website (see draft recommendation iii at paragraph 25). They also suggested that greater clarity be provided on how customers can book a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Finally they informed the Task Group of the training programme they have developed for York's taxi drivers, which has been conducted with the support of the main taxi associations. The programme provides drivers with information on the city's history and its main attractions and has proved very successful, and Visit York plan to continue providing the training in the future.

Analysis

60. In regard to meters, the Task Group considered how best to revise the council's policy to bring it in line with national best practice and considered wording in use in other council's policy e.g. Darlington Borough Council state the following in their policy:

'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 /supplier and/or installer.

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.....'

61. The Task Group were pleased to hear that Visit York consider York's taxi fleet to be a key factor in providing a 'quality visitor experience'. They expressed their thanks to Visit York for their work with York's taxi drivers, recognising that the training they provide enable the drivers to act as ambassadors for the city.

Recommendations – Objective (iv)

62. In regard to the fourth objective of this review, the Task Group agreed to recommend that:
- xiii. the council be sympathetic towards the introduction of taxi buses for use in rural areas and work with possible future providers to investigate how such services may be introduced.
 - xiv. In regard to taximeters, the policy to include a new specification - *'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 an approved manufacturer/supplier and/or installer'* The application of any GPS system must provide a comparable level of security for the customer.
 - xv. The new specification to 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.
 - xvi. The council to continue to assist in raising all drivers awareness of the training programme offered by Visit York.

Options

63. Having considered the information provided within this report and its associated annexes, Members may choose to amend and/or agree:
- the information gathered and analysis contained within this report

- the draft recommendations shown at paragraphs 20, 29, 53, 54 & 62 of this report

Implications

64. **Financial** - There are no financial implications for the council directly arising from this report. However, there may be financial implications for taxi drivers associated with the suggested recommendations in this final report. These include the purchase of newer vehicles, the phasing out of diesel cars and the replacement of meters. This may lead to legal challenge in the future which would result in added costs to the authority.
65. **Legal** - Given the approach that has been adopted for the review and the consultation that has taken place (in line with the DfT Guidance), the recommendations arising from the review are robust, and any legal challenge could therefore be resisted.
66. There are no known HR, Equalities, ITT or other implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Corporate Strategy

67. This topic falls within the remit of the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee and supports a number of the aims of the council's Corporate Strategy i.e. to make York a thriving city with a successful economy and a safer city.

Risk Management

68. There is a risk to the council of future legal challenge associated with the recommendations made within this report, as detailed at paragraph 65 above. In order to mitigate against such challenge and/or be robust in any defence, all licence conditions imposed a Licensing Authority must be 'reasonably necessary'. In order to satisfy this, any proposals need to be fully researched, any new requirements will need to be seen as reasonable and any significant proposals should be consulted upon prior to any policy being determined. However, the legal advice offered in this report suggests that the approach that has been adopted for the review and the consultation that took place was in line with the DfT Guidance, and therefore any legal challenge could be resisted.

Recommendations

69. Members agreed the recommendations (i) – (xvi) arising from this review , as shown at paragraphs 20, 29, 53, 54 & 62)

Reason: To conclude this review and enable the presentation of this final report to the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Contact Details

Author:

Melanie Carr
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel. 01904 552063

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director Legal, Governance & ITT

Report Approved **Date** 7 February 2011

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Legal – Martin Blythe
Senior Solicitor

Financial – Debbie Mitchell
Finance Manager

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes:

Annex A – Consultation Responses

Annex B – Briefing Note on Taxi Rank at Duncombe Place

Annex C – Information on Emissions from York's Taxi Fleet

Annex D – Briefing Note on LTP3 – The Introduction of Charging Points
Across the City

Task Group Members:

Cllr Joe Watt (Chair)

Cllr Dave Merrett

Cllr Christian Vassie