

Licensing and Regulatory Committee

6th November 2009

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

York Taxi Accreditation Scheme

Summary

1. This report advises members of proposals to develop a voluntary accreditation scheme for taxi and private hire drivers and companies and seeks their support. The scheme will lay down common standards of customer service and a mechanism for the arbitration of disputes. It will assist customers in knowing the standards of service they should expect when travelling in an accredited hire car in the city.

Background

2. When attending a meeting of the Social Inclusion Working Group to discuss taxi issues it became apparent to officers that different groups of customers were experiencing varied standards of service from licensed taxis and private hire vehicles in the city. These issues, such as helping with luggage, are outside legislative controls. Officers therefore examined options to address these issues.
3. A working group was established to look at the development of an accreditation scheme. Members of the group included representatives of York Access Group, of the taxi and private hire trade, trading standards who operate schemes for the Motor Trade and Home Services and licensing staff. Advice was also sought from the councils transport team in LCCS.
4. The group has met on several occasions and has developed a draft of the scheme which is attached at Annex 1. The scheme lays down general standards of service and specific standards for wheelchair accessible vehicles, it also provides an avenue for the reconciliation of disputes. It is recognised that there is still work to complete on the scheme details and supporting paperwork before the launch.
5. At the present time the scheme is being called YTAS (York Taxi Accreditation Scheme) although degree course students at York College are currently working on a logo and branding for the scheme and this may change. It is

envisaged that scheme members will display the logo on their vehicle, on their stationery and marketing material.

6. The following timetable is proposed to take the scheme forward for public launch in the spring.

Date	Activity
October-November	Draft scheme detail
October - November	Consultation: trade, stakeholders
6 th November	Licensing and Regulation Committee
November	Finalise scheme following consultation
December	Agree branding and market to trade and complete supplementary documentation
4 th January 2010	Start of Application period
28 th January	Report to Social Inclusion Working Group
January - February	Devise public marketing and scheme promotion
29 th March	Public Launch

Consultation

7. As the development of the scheme is a partnership approach all key stakeholders have been involved. It is proposed to write to all private hire operators and hackney drivers to seek their individual feedback before finalising the scheme.

Options

8. Option 1 : Support the development of the scheme in its present form or with amendments

Option 2 : Advise officers to abandon the scheme

Analysis

9. The origins of this scheme arose from comments from a range of groups who considered that it was difficult to know what levels of service they were to expect when travelling in a hackney or private hire vehicle. For some passengers this is not an issue but for others it is far more important and affects their decision whether to hire a taxi or not. This scheme has been developed to try and address issues of consistency of service. If the scheme is successful then it will help address those issues to the benefit of the taxi travelling public. The scheme should also have benefits for its members who should benefit from increased customer confidence and trade.

Corporate Strategy

10. The scheme supports the inclusive and thriving city elements of the Corporate Strategy

Implications

11. **Financial:** The scheme will have to be self financing through membership fees.

Human Resources (HR): None

Equalities: The scheme was arrived at as a result of assessing the impact of current licensing arrangements on users of licensed taxis and private hire vehicles in the city, disabled users in particular. It is expected to improve access to licensed taxis and private hire vehicles in the city particularly for disabled people

Legal : None

Crime and Disorder: None

Information Technology (IT): None

Property: None

Other: None

Risk Management

12. There is no risk to the council in developing this scheme.

Recommendations

13. Members are asked to approve Option 1 and support the development of the scheme

Reason: To increase consistency in service standards offered by licensed hire drivers in the City.

Author:
Richard Haswell
Head of Licensing and Safety

**Neighbourhoods and
Community Safety**

Tel No.01904 551515

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:
Andy Hudson
**Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods and
Community Safety**

Report Approved Date 20th Oct 09

Specialist Implications Officer
Legal - Martin Blythe
Tel No. 01904 551044

Wards Affected:

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Background Papers:

None

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Draft scheme