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MEETING	GAMBLING, LICENSING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE
DATE	25 APRIL 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS BOYCE (CHAIR), CRISP, DOUGHTY, GILLIES (VICE-CHAIR), JEFFRIES, KING, ORRELL, RICHES, SEMLYEN, RICHARDSON AND TAYLOR
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS HYMAN, LOOKER, MERRETT AND WISEMAN

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## **22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

At this point Members were asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

## **23. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Gambling, Licensing and Regulatory Committee held on 19 December 2011 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Members were informed that, following the meeting, the applicants had appealed against the additional condition that had been imposed by the Committee. Having consulted with the Chair and the Vice-Chair, it had been agreed that, although it had been imposed in good faith, there was insufficient evidence to sustain the condition and this matter had not therefore been pursued in the Courts.

## **24. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was reported that there had been thirteen registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme. The speakers were taxi drivers, including the Chairman of the Independent Taxi Association and the Secretary of the Private Hire Association. The speakers raised concerns regarding the Revised Taxi Licensing Policy (agenda item 4). The concerns raised included:

- The financial climate in which the taxi drivers were operating and the costs of fuel. Details were given of the impact that the fall in trade was having on drivers' livelihoods. The issuing of further taxi licenses would make the situation worse and could increase unemployment in the city.
- The survey had stated that there was no unmet demand in the city yet the Council was continuing to issue new licenses.
- Opposition to the proposal that only Euro 4 petrol vehicle class and Euro 5 diesel vehicle class would be accepted for new private hire applications and all replacement vehicles.
- Some of the vehicles in the vehicle list were too expensive.
- Any introduction of such a scheme should be phased in gradually.
- The impact on air quality was far higher in respect of buses. Taxis did not have a significant impact on air quality. Traffic light sequencing needed to be reviewed because it was a factor.
- Attention was drawn to the situation nationally, including best practice guidelines. The Government would be issuing a major document on issues in respect of taxis and this should be awaited before decisions were taken locally.
- There had been a lack of consultation with the taxi trade prior to the implementation of the policy. Drivers urged the Committee to instigate proper consultation.
- Consideration should be given to introducing incentives to encourage the purchase of more environmentally friendly vehicles.
- Problems arose in repairing and maintaining the Euro 4 and Euro 5 vehicles.
- It was possible to remove the filters on the vehicles which negated the environmental benefits.
- Electric vehicles were impractical because they could not be used for longer journeys, for example airport runs.
- Wheelchair accessible taxis did not meet the needs of all passengers with mobility difficulties.
- At a time when a Fairness Commission was in place the Council was not acting fairly to taxi drivers and the situation in which they found themselves. The Council should have a duty of care to existing drivers and be

mindful of the impact of the recession – it was not fair to issue further licenses.

The Chair thanked the registered speakers for their comments.

## **25. REVISED TAXI LICENSING POLICY**

Members considered a report that sought their approval to amend the Taxi Licensing Policy to permit officers to update the list of approved vehicle types for which new hackney carriage vehicle licenses would be issued.

Members considered the options outlined in paragraphs 7-12 of the report.

Referring to comments raised under the Public Participation item on the agenda, Members sought clarification as to the situation nationally. Officers confirmed that the Law Commission was looking at the legislation in respect of taxi licensing but information had not yet been received.

Clarification was sought as to the consultation that had taken place with the taxi trade prior to the introduction of the policy. Details were given of the scrutiny review that had taken place on the Taxi Licensing Policy, during which the taxi associations had been consulted. The policy had resulted from the scrutiny review. Whilst some Members expressed their support for the policy and the measures that were proposed to encourage vehicles with lower emissions, other Members suggested that, in view of the issues that had been raised during the meeting, more consideration needed to be given to this matter. They were concerned that there had been no further consultation prior to the policy's introduction. Members also suggested that consideration should be given to a more staged introduction, particularly in the current economic climate.

**RESOLVED:** (i) That officers be requested to carry out further consultation with the taxi trade regarding the policy, including issues in respect of vehicle emissions and the granting of licenses.

- (ii) That, following the consultation, a further report be presented to the Committee for consideration.

REASON: To enable further consideration to be given to the policy in the light of issues raised during the meeting.

Councillor Boyce, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.20 pm].