

**Taxi Forum
Council Chamber, Shirehall**

**28th October 2014
11.00 am – 1.35 pm**

Present:

Trade Representatives: 43 Drivers/Operators

Officers: Mandy Beever (Transactional Manager)
Matthew Clark (Public Protection Officer – Environmental Resilience team)
Jamie Tawn (Public Protection Officer – Licensing)
Pete Barrow (Public Protection Officer – Licensing)
Stacia Cotton (Public Protection Officer – Licensing)
Julie Fildes (Committee Officer)

ACTION

1. Introduction

The Transactional Manager welcomed all to the forum and introduced the Shropshire Council Officers present.

She explained that the purpose of the forum was part of the consultation process on the revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. Consultation forums had been held with stake holders earlier in the year and their comments had been incorporated into the re-drafted revised policy. An additional consultation forum had been arranged with Operators and Drivers due to the significant changes to the revised policy. She emphasised that all comments during the morning would be included in the consultation process.

2. Relevant Dates

MB outlined the time frame of the consultation process:

- An extension of consultation period had been agreed to allow further comment. The consultation period was to finish at midnight on 2nd November 2014;
- The Revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy would be submitted to the Strategic Licensing Committee on 10th December 2014;
- Strategic Licensing Committee would submit their recommendations to full Council for approval on 25th February 2015; and
- If Council approved the revised policy it would come into force on 1st April 2015.

3 Emissions

Matthew Clarke of the Environment Resilience Team gave a presentation on Addressing Emissions.

4 The Discussion

A discussion then ensued with the main points listed below:

Air Quality: The policy was necessary as the Council had a duty to review and assess air quality and take action to improve air quality. Vehicle emissions were a main contributor to poor air quality and there was not a safe level for poor air quality. To have different requirements for different areas would be discriminatory.

Quality of data: It was agreed that that charts had been simplified for ease of use but more detailed information was available on request.

Time Frames: Operators and drivers complained that the time frames were inadequate and adversely affected their business operations. They observed that manufacturers were not yet producing the higher specification vehicles required. The cost of replacing vehicles to meet the new standards would increase their costs unreasonably. It was agreed that should the time frames be found to be too restrictive they could be reviewed at an appropriate future time.

Additional steps to improve air quality:

- Smarter traffic signalling to reduce travel time;
- Grant funding from Defra to provide equipment to monitor congestion levels at traffic lights;
- Improved traffic management systems;
- Pedestrianisation of town centres – beyond remit of policy;
- Relief road, a highways issue;
- Subsidy for buses to make routes profitable – if realistic could be put forward as part of the consultation;
- Taking vehicles such as waste collection vehicles off the roads at peak times - this was outside the scope of this policy and would depend on the contract terms of the parties involved; and
- Availability of cleaner fuels.

Emissions from other vehicles: Vehicles available for hire spent more time driving or waiting in the towns whereas private vehicles tended to make one journey in and out and so were less polluting. There might be fewer taxis but they produced a fair proportion of the

pollution. The public were not subject to these conditions as they do not use their vehicles for trade purposes and so were not subject to licensing conditions.

Cost of increased emission standards: Operators asked that the Council consider assisting with the costs that the new standards would impose on their businesses.

Amalgamation of Zones: the Equalities act did not allow a lowering of standards when amalgamating zones. All former separate zones would have to meet the highest criteria which was that all Hackney Carriages should be wheel chair accessible. Operators suggested that this would impose unnecessary expense in areas where there was no demand for this type of vehicle. Other Operators countered that there was very little expense and ordinary vehicles were available to purchase which could be adapted to comply with the regulations at very little cost. Drivers commented that not all wheel chair accessible vehicles were suitable for all disabled people.

Colour of vehicles: The revised policy stated that all hackney carriages should be black and carry a roof sign to enable Members of the public to easily identify them as such. Private Hire Vehicles could be any colour except black. Operators commented that if this was introduced it would increase the cost of black wheel chair accessible vehicles. It would also result in them not being able to use the full life of their existing vehicles. The transitional arrangements were noted.

Transfer of Plates: Operators requested that new operators should be required to have new vehicles. It was suggested that existing operators should be able to transfer plates to a comparable vehicle when replacing vehicles in their fleet.

New Plating Requirements: Although the cost was queried, on the whole Operators and Drivers supported the new requirements. It was suggested that front plates should be undated.

Tariffs and Taxi Ranks: Not under the scope of this policy.

Executive Plates: The intention to include the current requirements for plating was noted.

Illegal Operations and Touting: Operators suggested the addition of pull back zones be suggested. The Police had been made aware of issues.

The meeting closed at 1.35pm