

## **LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**7th March 2022**

**Present:** Councillor Allah Ditta in the Chair

Councillors Barnes, Bayliss, Cronin,  
Geraghty, Hassan (Vice-Chair), Lawrance,  
Stanley and Udall

**Also in Attendance:**

Councillor Agar

**Officers:** Lloyd Griffiths - Corporate Director,  
Operations, Homes and  
Communities

Vanessa Brown - Solicitor

Niall - Principal Officer -  
McMenamin Licensing, WRS

Kiran Lahel - Licensing and Support  
Services Manager, WRS

**Apologies:** Councillor Lewing

### **24 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **25 Public Representations**

Mr Sajad, and Mr Saleem, members of Worcester Taxi Forum, addressed the Committee. Following an initial proposal for an increase in taxi fares submitted to Worcestershire Regulatory Services a further, updated proposal had been submitted by the Forum.

Drivers were concerned that the next meeting of the Committee in June was too long to wait for the updated proposal to be brought before Members.

Members queried why the fare increase proposal had not yet been brought to Committee. Officers responded that additional time was required to properly contextualise the updated proposal in order to provide a proper briefing for Members.

The Chair acknowledged the concerns expressed regarding timings and agreed that an extraordinary meeting would be held in advance of the next scheduled Committee meeting in June to consider the fare increase.

Following Public Representations and subsequent discussions, Sergeant Simon Hallam and Police Constable Jen Evans addressed the Committee at the Chair's

invitation, providing an overview of their work regarding South Worcestershire licensing matters, including PC Evans' work towards Purple Flag/Best Bar None accreditation.

## 26 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 27 **Proposal to Appoint an Evening Hackney Carriage Stand at Cathedral Square**

Members discussed a proposal to formalise the use of Cathedral Square Bus layby as a Hackney Carriage stand outside of bus operation hours.

Currently the last bus departs at 19:00hrs, however the later start time of 20:30hrs had been proposed to allow for the possibility of a later bus service in the future.

Cllr Agar, in attendance, asked to address the Committee and voiced her approval for the proposal. Cllr Agar expressed concern for taxi drivers operating against a backdrop of increasing costs.

Members unanimously welcomed the proposal which would provide a convenient option for Hackney Carriage drivers and patrons of the bars and restaurants situated at the Cathedral Square end of town; a busy and important location for Worcester's night time economy.

**RESOLVED: that Committee**

- 1) notes the contents of the report and the proposal to utilise Cathedral Square bus layby as a Hackney Carriage Stand, daily between 20:30hrs – 06:00hrs**
- 2) approves the undertaking of a 28-day public consultation process in respect of the proposal outlined at recommendation 1.1 of the report**
- 3) subject to a review of consultation feedback, delegates the Corporate Director of Operations, Homes & Communities in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee to make a final decision on implementation.**

## 28 **Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy Review of Consultation Responses**

The Committee considered the draft hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy review of consultation responses, presented by Officers.

Consultation on the draft policy had taken place between 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Most respondents were supportive of the proposals in the draft policy.

It was acknowledged that the implementation of the new standard may have some impact on existing licence holders and also those applying for a new hackney carriage and private hire driver licence, however it was hoped that this may be mitigated by:

- Introduction of partial refunds to licence holders who surrender licences midterm
- The removal of the current vehicle minimum engine cc restriction, allowing vehicle proprietors to licence both electric and more fuel-efficient vehicles.
- A reduced financial outlay over a longer term in relation to DBS checks.
- The acceptance of DBS certificates from those applicants already signed up to the DBS update service.
- The introduction of a more efficient process to relicence suspended vehicles, where licences have expired due to being suspended past two months.

In the ensuing discussion, concerns were raised about passengers with assistance dogs being denied access to taxis. Officers responded that incidents of this kind would be treated seriously and that Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) were committed to supporting any members of the public who had experienced poor service from licence holders.

Officers responded to questions about the likelihood of licence holders who lived outside the UK for a period of 3 or more continuous months being able to provide either criminal records information or a certificate of good character from the respective country concerned. Committee Members were advised that where licence holders were not able to provide such information, they could be referred to the Sub-Committee for determination on a case-by-case basis, however, Officers agreed to give the matter further consideration.

Some Members were concerned that visually impaired customers would have difficulty in identifying car and driver information in the event of such a complaint. Officers responded that licence holders were expected to operate at the highest standard and must meet the test of being 'a fit and proper' person in order to be licensed as a driver.

It was suggested that CCTV within taxis could be a potential solution for this issue. Officers suggested that whilst it was not considered an appropriate time at present to introduce additional financial burdens, it may be a matter for future consideration.

**RESOLVED: That Committee:**

- 1) notes the contents of the report, in particular the consultation feedback document at "Appendix 1".**

**2) approved the Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy at "Appendix 2", to take effect on 1st September 2022**

**29 Any Other Business**

A request was made for Pest Control and Air Quality agenda items to be considered at a future meeting of the Committee. Officers acknowledged the request but reiterated that agenda setting fell within the Chair and Vice-Chair's remit.

**Duration of the meeting:** Time Not Specified to Time Not Specified

Chairman at the meeting on  
24th March 2022