

## PART A

**Report to:** Licensing Committee  
**Date of meeting:** 14 July 2014  
**Report of:** Head of Community and Customer Services  
**Title:** Driver and Vehicle Implementation Plan

### 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Licensing Committee was advised at its last meeting on 18 March 2014 about consultations being undertaken by officers with hackney carriage and private hire drivers licensed by the council. This included some changes to policies, practices and procedures affecting licence-holders.
- 1.2 The Committee agreed that, in the absence of any substantial changes to the proposed policies, officers could implement the policies in consultation with the Chair. No substantial changes have been proposed and this report is to update Members on progress.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members note the report.

**Contact Officer:**

For further information on this report please contact: Jeffrey Leib (Licensing Manager) on telephone extension: 8476 or email [jeffrey.leib@watford.gov.uk](mailto:jeffrey.leib@watford.gov.uk).

**Report approved by:** Alan Gough, Head of Community and Customer Services

### 3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Licensing Committee will be aware that it considered potential changes to three policies affecting hackney carriages and private hire vehicles at its last meeting on 18 March 2014. The Committee also was informed of several other proposed changes to regulation of the trade that do not require Committee approval. Officers have since conducted a consultation exercise about those proposals.

- 3.2 The Committee agreed that, unless substantial changes were proposed through the consultation, the policies could be implemented by officers in consultation with the Chair.
- 3.3 Officers held an open meeting to explain the proposals, which around 60 drivers attended. This was followed by a written consultation, to which 131 drivers responded.
- 3.4 The majority of drivers were in favour of each of the proposed changes, which are set out below:

(1) *Changes to enforcement policy*

The proposal to replace the existing penalty point scheme with a new model was supported by 108 drivers, with sixteen not fully supporting the proposals. A separate report is before the Committee setting out those changes.

(2) *Town centre taxi ranks*

Drivers were asked about their views on proposed changes to taxi ranks in the town centre. Their views are below but any changes have to be subject to a formal public consultation, as with any other changes to Traffic Regulation Orders, with all stakeholders, and a separate project plan is being developed to take these proposals forward.

	Support	Don't support
<i>Introduce a short-term pick-up point within the town centre</i>	83	49
<i>Install taxi ranks on current waiting restrictions in High Street and remove taxi rank from New Street</i>	118	13
<i>Investigate restricting Albert Road South to taxis only at night</i>	117	12

(3) *Trial of magnetic door signs*

Eighty-six drivers agreed that magnetic door signs on hackney carriages should be tried for a year, and 36 disagreed. Officers are ordering a supply of magnetic door signs for drivers to purchase at cost, although they may still use permanent door signs should they wish. The impacts of the use of such signs will be assessed in 12 months.

(4) *Hackney carriage vehicle age limit*

Drivers were asked their views about relaxing the maximum age that vehicles could be first licensed as hackney carriages from four to seven years. A clear majority of 121 drivers favoured the approach over 9 who did not. The change to the policy is therefore being implemented by officers.

(5) *Driving Standards Agency (DSA) test*

Drivers were asked whether they should have to re-take the DSA hackney carriage/private hire assessment, or undertake some other driving assessment, if their Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) licence is endorsed for driving offences. A majority (111 drivers) were again in favour of ending all of the tests, with twenty-two in favour of an assessment by the Institute of Advanced Motorists and four in favour of other alternatives. The policy requiring drivers to re-take the DSA test has accordingly been revoked.

(6) *Review of vehicle licence conditions*

Seventy-two drivers considered that a review of vehicle licence conditions was needed, and fifty-three were not in support. Thirteen drivers have volunteered to sit on a working party to review those, which officers are now forming.

(7) *Hackney carriage fare tariff*

An overwhelming majority of 121 drivers supported an annual review of the hackney carriage tariff, and two were against. Ninety-two drivers agreed with the suggestion that a working party is developed to agree the methodology for future reviews and officers are convening this with eight volunteers.

(8) *Communicating with drivers*

Drivers were largely in favour of three means of communicating changes to them in future:

- by text message (116 in favour and twelve against)
- by a quarterly drop-in session where they can meet Members of the Committee and officers (97 in favour and twenty-nine against) and
- by an annual meeting with the Chair (104 in favour and twenty-three against)

(9) *Vehicle accident policy*

A majority of drivers (eighty-one and forty-three against) were in favour of allowing vehicles damaged in accidents to be still used as licensed vehicles pending repairs, providing the vehicle was still safe. This means that occasionally some vehicles which would have otherwise failed the annual vehicle inspection will still carry passengers whilst the repairs are being arranged.

3.5 Officers have produced an action plan to implement these changes, which is attached at appendix 1 for information.

## 4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

### 4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no budget implications arising from the policy changes in this report.

4.1.2 Any budget implications from subsequent changes to the taxi ranks will be reported separately.

### 4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no direct legal issues flowing from the changes to these policies providing the Committee is satisfied that there has been adequate consultation and the policies are not unreasonable, discriminatory or disproportionate.

4.3 **Potential Risks**  
*by the impact.*

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Litigation following the committee not implementing a validly consulted-upon proposals	3	3	9

Appendices

Driver and Vehicle Implementation Plan

Background Papers

Driver's consultation questionnaire February 2014

Driver's survey returns March 2014

File Reference

None