

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting8th December 2011

1. Title of Item/Report

Taxis in Bus Lanes - Stockton-on-Tees Borough

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a request from the Stockton Hackney Carriage Drivers Association for taxis to be permitted to use bus lanes, which was first raised during the 2010 Housing and Community Safety Select Committee Scrutiny Review of the Taxi Licencing service.

The Association were of the view that they were part of the wider public transport service and were at a disadvantage in not being able to utilise the dedicated bus lanes in the Borough as it lead to them having to take longer routes in some cases which was not welcomed by their passengers. They also referred to their need to be able to drop off disabled passengers in the central part of Stockton High Street; which was presently facilitated by a permit system. The Association, in seeking support for their proposal, referred to a number of the local authority areas where taxis and in some cases private hire vehicles were allowed to use bus lanes.

Representatives of the Stockton Hackney Carriage Drivers Association were present at the meeting and spoke in support of their request.

As a result of the request a report was compiled with input from a number of stakeholders including the Police, Sustrans, bus operators and Tees Valley Unlimited. None of these organisations supported the proposal and most of which actually objected on a number of grounds but principally on safety concerns, including a potential for an increase in vehicle collisions.

It was accepted that some other local authorities allowed taxis in bus lanes, however officers were of the view that each authority needed to take a view based on their own local circumstances. Neighbouring authorities were contacted by officers to compile a position statement on current policy across the Tees Valley. Authorities from further afield such as Edinburgh and Birmingham were contacted by the SHCDA to understand their policy on taxis in bus lanes. The position varied from

taxis and private hire vehicles being allowed in bus lanes to just taxis. In some cases the authorities did accept that there was in practice no enforcement of restrictions. In major cities in particular, many of the bus lanes were 'with flow' and did not carry the same road safety concerns that were associated with contraflow bus lanes, of which there were three examples in Stockton.

Due to the fact that there were a number of contra-flow bus lanes in the Borough and taking on board the particular safety concerns around allowing taxis in bus lanes from the various stakeholders consulted, it was proposed that the request be not supported. The concerns regards the need to drop off disabled passengers in the central part of Stockton High Street would continue to be allowed for permit holders but the fee of £10 would no longer be required. The facility, including drop off points, would also be addressed as part of the infrastructure improvements for Stockton Town Centre considered later on by Cabinet at this particular meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet agree the policy of not allowing taxis to utilise bus lanes in the Borough.
2. Cabinet note that permits to allow disabled accessible hackneys and private hire vehicles to access the restricted northbound lane of Stockton High Street will now be made available free of charge.

3. Reasons for the Decision

1. Significant concerns exist over the safety for other road users, the passengers in buses and pedestrians as evidenced by objections and concern from bus operators, Sustrans, the Police and Tees Valley Unlimited.
2. Journey times on bus routes and the operation of bus hurry call facilities will be adversely impacted by allowing significant numbers of taxis to use the bus lanes and the likelihood of taxis stopping to pick up or drop off passengers.
3. The licensing policy in the Borough means that there is a limited difference in appearance between hackney carriages, private hire vehicles and private cars. All of which are in essence motor cars, the only difference with a hackney carriage is that they are black in colour and have a small roof sign. This would make enforcement of the bus lane very difficult and could be perceived by other motorists as having no restrictions in place.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected
None
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest
None
6. Details of any Dispensations
Not applicable
7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed
Midnight on Monday 19 December 2011

Proper Officer
13 December 2011