

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee

Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 19 October 2010

Review of Taxi Trade Licenses

The Committee met with representatives of the taxi trade on 12th July having previously received written evidence. The scope of the review is:

1. the resource and funding of the administration and enforcement service including the levels of enforcement and the activities undertaken.
2. the vehicle testing station.
3. transport planning:
 - using taxis as part of the public transport service,
 - the provision of taxi ranks,
 - the use of bus lanes, and
 - exemptions from road traffic orders.

Key issues raised: Comparative fees for licences; Comparative costs - ratio analysis with other large authorities; Operational systems – time to process applications etc: Fee setting and budgetary process

Continuing concerns: Past action and unresolved issues; Cost allocations and determination.

The Committee met on 10th August to take evidence from SBC officers. Responding to the Taxi Trade issues showed that the majority of the expenditure is in staffing and support costs. Support costs include management support, accommodation, legal services, IT support etc. The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 sets out the statutory means for recharging these costs to the trade.

Disagreement over the comparison information submitted was resolved on 15th September when SBC officers and Taxi Trade representatives met. This has meant a delay in finalising the Committee's report and recommendations until 4th October. The Committee received a draft report and formulated its recommendations which include:

- Exploring changes to the preparation of taxi license plates;
- Aligning license renewals with vehicle testing;
- Reducing the number of plates on license renewals to reduce costs;
- The determination of fees to be delegated to SBC's Licensing Committee;
- Consult about the introduction of 3-year licenses;
- Improving the IT communication between the vehicle testing centre and Church Road offices;
- Investigating the taxi rank provision in Thornaby town centre; and
- Commenting on a report to determine taxis using bus lanes.

The Committee will present its report to Cabinet on 28th October.

EIT Gateway Review of Administration, Business Support / Customer Services, and Performance Management

Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)

The Committee met on the 1st of July to agree the scope and project plan. The next meeting with the Committee is due to take place on the 21st October to agree the baseline of posts, locations and budgets and any other supporting information.

The review is split into four strands being general admin, PAs, business support and performance management and technical admin. The technical admin strand will be looked at in phase 2 of the review.

Posts have been identified and confirmed with the relevant heads of service for all four strands. Discussions are due to be undertaken for the PA and business support and performance strands, with an online survey being completed for the general admin strand on the 27th August. Analysis of this information is currently being completed to establish the administrative tasks at various locations throughout the Borough.

Budgetary analysis is also being done and should be completed once discussions have been completed.

There has been an initial meeting with the unions, however, regular monthly meetings have been set up with UNISON, Unite and GMB in order to update the unions on the progress of the review. There has also been regular communication with staff affected by the review through 'Keeping You In Touch', a weekly online newsletter. Staff have also been given the opportunity to convey any questions or concerns via the admin review email account, with approximately 70 messages received.

Monitoring

The initial monitoring of the EIT Review of Regulatory Services was due to be presented at the meeting on 15th July. This will now be presented at the meeting on 21st October due to the time needed for the Review of Taxi Licensing.

Other monitoring was deferred until the Review of Taxi Licensing concluded.