

General Licensing Committee

A meeting of General Licensing Committee was held on Tuesday, 22nd October, 2019.

Present: Cllr Paul Kirton(Chairman), Cllr Eileen Johnson(Vice-Chair), Cllr Jacky Bright, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Julia Whitehill,

Officers: Jonathan Nertney (HR,L&C), Leanne Maloney-Kelly, Margaret Waggott, Sarah Whaley (DCE)

Also in attendance: Representatives from Tees Valley Cars, Station Taxis, Skyline and Teesside Cars

Apologies: Cllr Tina Large, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Julia Whitehill, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE

**GLC
22/19** **Evacuation Procedure**

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

**GLC
23/19** **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**GLC
24/19** **PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENSING POLICY
AMENDMENTS - CONSULTATION**

Members were asked to comment on the proposed changes to the current policy as detailed within the main report.

Representatives from Tees Valley Cars, Station Taxis, Skyline and Teesside Cars were in attendance at the meeting and given the opportunity to make representation.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- the trade had requested the current policy was amended for new applicants to have held a full DVLA licence for 12 months rather than the current policy requirement of three years which was introduced by this authority at the 2016 transport policy review. Representatives from the Taxi Trade explained that more applicants were being licensed with Middlesbrough Authority as they only required a 12 month DVLA licence. The Trade indicated that eighteen drivers had currently been lost to Middlesbrough who were working in Stockton.

- the trade had commented that the higher requirement was making it increasingly difficult to recruit new drivers, the trade raised issues regarding cross border applications with other authorities and requested the need for an equitable approach across the Tees Valley.

- the Committee briefly discussed issues surrounding Wolverhampton's licensing requirements being less stringent than Stockton's and the impact this was having within the Tees Valley in terms of an increase in Wolverhampton licenced vehicles which were operating in the TS area. Wolverhampton's

licensed vehicles completed an annual MOT for vehicles under 10 years old, as opposed to this authority which required an annual MOT plus biannual vehicle compliance tests.

- vehicles registered in Wolverhampton could be up to 10 years old and be kept until they were 17 years old, whereas vehicles registered with Stockton were registered up to 5 years old and kept until 12 years old.

- the latest figures showed 5 private hire operators in the TS area were licensing vehicles through Wolverhampton.

- Members request for information on insurance claims made by / against drivers with 1,2,3 years driving experience was put to the Association of British Insurers, however at the time of print no reply had been received. Officers did however provide members with a link which had additional information contained within the main report.

- discussion took place around the minimum age of licensed taxi drivers. Middlesbrough Council had 3 drivers under 21 years of age, indicating the Private Hire or Hackney Carriage profession did not attract young drivers.

- the Taxi Trade represented at the meeting confirmed between them that they only had one driver under the age of 25.

- questions were raised as to whether drivers as young as 18 / 19 years of age with a 1 year DVLA licence could obtain a Taxi Drivers licence in other areas and operate within Stockton. Officers confirmed that this could be the case.

- comments were made as to why Stockton had to consider amending their standards. Stockton should be seeking to maintain their policy requirements. Officers informed the Committee that there could be future reviews of Taxi and Private Hire Licensing in the future.

- it was noted that local businesses and the general public could request a Stockton licensed vehicle when hiring taxis.

- overall it was felt that Stockton needed a level playing field by reducing the length of time a driver held a DVLA licence from 3 years to 1, to continue to maintain some control over licensed vehicles and not lose operators and drivers to those out of the area.

RESOLVED that the views of this Committee regarding the recent amendments to the consultation on Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Policy be noted and be submitted to Cabinet and thereafter Council for consideration.