

LICENSING COMMITTEE

1.00 P.M.

21ST NOVEMBER 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Sally Maddocks (Chair), Margaret Pattison (Vice-Chair), Louise Belcher, Gerry Blaikie, Martin Bottoms, Maria Deery, John Hanson and Paul Tynan

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Andrew Gardiner

Officers in attendance:

Jennifer Curtis	Licensing Manager
Daniel Spencer	Lawyer
Sarah Moorghen	Democratic Support Officer

32 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2024 were signed by the Chair as a correct record

33 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35 WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES - RESULTS OF MYSTERY SHOPPING EXERCISE

The Licensing Manager presented a report on the outcomes of a mystery shopping exercise whereby Lancaster City Council Officers had tried to obtain the services of wheelchair accessible vehicles operating in the district.

The Committee was advised that in recent years the Licensing Service had received sporadic complaints about the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicle's (WAVs). Feedback suggests that WAVs were not available at any time and additionally not available to pre-book for future journeys.

It was reported that Licensing Officers had undertaken a complete audit of the 15 mandatory Hackney Carriage WAVs. Licensing Officers had inspected all the vehicle's and observed use of safety equipment and passenger handling procedures. The public register had been updated to include the direct telephone lines of the vehicle proprietor's to ensure that users could contact a suitable vehicle directly instead of via an operator.

The Committee was advised that a mystery shopper exercise had been planned to take place between Friday 11th October and Friday 22nd October 2024 with each proprietor being contacted 4 times. During the time period officers managed to contact each

proprietor twice. It was felt that attempts to make bookings after those responses were not authentic and proprietors had become aware it was a mystery shopper call.

It was reported that the first round of calls, 15 calls were made, 14 answered and 2 proprietors accepted an immediate hire booking for a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Both gave a 10–15 minute wait time.

In the second round, the scenario was a job from Lancaster train station to a wedding in mid-November on behalf of a family member who required a wheelchair accessible vehicle. 15 calls were made, 3 were unanswered and 0 proprietors accepted a booking.

The Committee asked a number of questions and discussed the various possible actions.

It was proposed by Councillor Tynan and seconded by Councillor Hanson; -

“That private hire operators running more than 10 licensed private hire and hackney carriage vehicles at any one time must have at least one wheelchair accessible vehicle available for every 10 licensed vehicles working at any time.”

Councillor Maddocks then proposed a friendly amendment, by way of an addendum, which Councillor Tynan and Councillor Hanson, as the proposer and seconder of the original motion, accepted:

“That there would be zero tolerance to emissions if this was not achieved”

A vote was taken and unanimously agreed; -

Resolved:

- (1) That private hire operators running more than 10 licensed private hire and hackney carriage vehicles at any one time must have at least one wheelchair accessible vehicle available for every 10 licensed vehicles working at any time.
- (2) That there would be zero tolerance to emissions if this was not achieved.

It was then proposed by Councillor Belcher and seconded by Councillor Blaikie:

“That the policy change be reviewed 6 months post implementation.”

A vote was taken and unanimously agreed.

Resolved:

- (3) That the policy change be reviewed 6 months post implementation.

It was then proposed by Councillor Hanson and seconded by Councillor Deery; -

“That further research on the issue’s around wheelchair accessible vehicles be conducted after the review.”

A vote was taken and unanimously agreed:

Resolved:

- (4) That further research on the issue's around wheelchair accessible vehicles be conducted after the review.

It was proposed by Councillor Maddocks and seconded by Councillor Tynan; -

“That a request be made to the Chief Executive and the Chief Officer – Environment and Place, to find resources to pursue the use of the Electric Taxi Air Quality Grant Scheme funds.”

A vote was taken and agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

- (5) That a request be made to the Chief Executive and the Chief Officer – Environment and Place, to find resources to pursue the use of the Electric Taxi Air Quality Grant Scheme funds.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 2.20 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Sarah Moorghen, Democratic Support - email smoorghen@lancaster.gov.uk**