

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 25 April 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Sargeant (Chair); Councillors Ansell, M Hill, Culbard and Beardsworth

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Flavell, G Eales and Duffy.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous Licensing Committee held on 7th February 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr J Matthews addressed the Committee speaking in support of item 6. He suggested that a cap on the number of plates issued might inspire confidence in drivers to buy better vehicles. He also stated that it would be a good idea to restructure the plates' numbers, so that temporary vehicles were more easily identifiable. Mr Matthews also voiced his support on item 7, commenting that Hackney drivers were currently struggling with a lack of variance in the vehicles they could drive.

Mr K Wilshire addressed the Committee speaking in support of item 6. He noted that the survey within the report had found that there were too many Hackney cabs in the town, stating that some drivers would regularly wait for 2 or more hours for a job. He stated that the Hackney trade was being unfairly subsidised with vehicles that were not economical. He further stated that the Hackney trade was suffering due to unfair competition with the rise of hybrid vehicles used for private hire. It was further noted that temporary ranks in the town had not been very successful and that they would serve customers and drivers better in places such as Northampton General Hospital and the top of Abington Street. Mr Wilshire also spoke in support of item 7, commenting that the introduction of rear access vehicles would allow more wheelchair users to use a Hackney vehicle.

Mr S Ward addressed the Committee speaking in favour of item 6. He commented that the real problem was the number of poor quality vehicles in Northampton, stating that many were bought at a reduced cost in London after they no longer met minimum requirements there.

The Licensing Team Leader informed Mr Ward that vehicle quality was not pertinent to this report, only the number of vehicles to be licensed.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

6. CAPPING HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCES

The Licensing Team Leader submitted a report and elaborated thereon. The report provided by CTS Traffic & Transportation concluded that there is no evidence of any unmet demand

for the services of hackneys either patent or latent which is significant, so a cap of 155 hackney carriage licences was recommended. This number would accommodate the current 147 licences, plus approximately 5-8 vehicles that may or may not have been presented for renewal at the time the report was written. It was noted that other authorities used either a waiting list or selection criteria/ballot process system for designating new licensees; the latter being recommended for Northampton Borough Council as the waiting list system has proven difficult to manage for other authorities. It was stated that a 4 week period following the lapse of a licence renewal would be given, considered up to an 8 week period in exceptional circumstances.

In response to questions asked, Members heard that since this survey was so comprehensive and had many facets, it was only pertinent to Northampton; comparing with other authorities would provide no benefit.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

That it was reasonable to limit the amount of hackney carriage licences granted in Northampton with immediate effect and adopt the proposals regarding the renewal of a lapsed licence at 3.1.16

7. CHANGE OF POLICY - ALTERNATIVE VEHICLES FOR USE AS HACKNEY CARRIAGE

The Senior Licensing Enforcement Officer submitted a report which sought Committee's agreement to an amendment to the Council policy regarding Hackney Carriage specifications relating to "side loading" access only for wheelchairs. The Chair elaborated on a statement that had been submitted by the Chair of the Council's Disabled People's Forum which raised concerns about certain vehicles using certain pick up points, stating that there should be one disabled pick up point where wheelchair users could be loaded via either a side or rear access vehicle easily and safely. The Chair of the Disabled People's Forum also recommended that a pick up point for wheelchair users be in place before new Hackney vehicles accessed from the rear be introduced.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

That with immediate effect, alternative vehicles be made available for use as a Hackney Carriage provided they had wheelchair access

The meeting concluded at 6:59pm