

Appendices:



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Cabinet response to Scrutiny Report on the effectiveness of enforcement of taxi and private hire licensing
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AGENDA STATUS: Public

Cabinet Meeting Date:	8 February 2017
Key Decision:	No
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Customers & Communities
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna King
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the recommendations in the Overview and Scrutiny report on the Effectiveness of Enforcement of Licensing Policy in respect of Taxis and Private Hire, presented to Cabinet on 11 May 2016

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the recommendations included in the Overview and Scrutiny report on the Effectiveness of Enforcement of Licensing Policy in respect of Taxis and Private Hire are accepted.
- 2.2 That the task and finish group are formally congratulated on a high quality and comprehensive report and thanked for the time and effort given to produce it.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programming event for 2015/2016 the scrutiny of the Effectiveness of Enforcement of Licensing Policy in respect of Taxis and Private Hire was identified as a key priority. This was therefore included within the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/2016.
- 3.1.2 A total of six meetings were held to gather evidence from a broad range of stakeholders. During this process a significant amount of evidence was heard.
- 3.1.3 15 recommendations are included in the report. They are broadly focussed on how the Council can improve the effectiveness of the enforcement of Licensing Policy

3.2 Recommendations and Service Responses

3.2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that:

1. Consideration is given to the provision of additional taxi ranks in the town centre suggested locations are Abington Street, The Parade, Guildhall Road / Derngate and Mercers Row.

In progress - Preliminary discussions have been held with the Regeneration Team and partner agencies with a view to identifying suitable sites for further taxi ranks. Applications for Traffic Regulation Order Amendments will be made for any sites identified as being suitable.

2. Taxi rank signage is put in situ at the various ranks within the town.

In progress - Statutory signage is in place. Street works are planned to take place in the area of the main taxi rank in the coming months and signage will be reviewed as part of this process.

3. An unmet demand survey for Hackney Carriages is undertaken in order to Determine whether the number of Hackney Carriages exceeds requirements and whether a cap is necessary. This survey should also consider the extent of the Private Hire Trade and be undertaken every three years.

In progress - An initial unmet demand survey was carried out in late 2016. The results are currently being analysed and will be reported to Licensing Committee in Spring 2017

4. A sign for Private Hire Vehicles (PHV) to display "Pre Booked only" is issued to all PHV. The sign must be on display at all times.

Complete - Private Hire Vehicle Condition no 19 requires the display of a roof sign displaying the wording "ADVANCE BOOKINGS ONLY" whenever the vehicle is in use as a private hire vehicle. The overall issue of taxi and private

hire signage is currently under consideration and informal consultations have been carried out with the Hackney and Private Hire Trade.

5. The Scrutiny Panel informs Cabinet that it supports the further introduction of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) training for all Hackney carriage and private hire drivers in Northampton. Details of the CSE training is presented to the Licensing Committee regarding its roll out and content

In progress - Training on CSE is now incorporated in the Private Hire Driver induction training. Plans are in hand to deliver training sessions to existing drivers and in the proposed review of policies CSE training will be made a mandatory requirement for all Licence holders. Licensing Committee will be kept informed of the progress of this action

6. When approved, the relevant sections from the Low Emissions Strategy for Northampton are included within the licensing Policy for Taxis and Private Hire.

In progress - A draft taxi emissions policy was presented to Licensing Committee in October 2016 and the consultation on this strategy closes on 16 February.

7. The standard test to become a Private Hire driver is raised.

Complete - The standard of the Private Hire and Hackney driver tests are kept under review and frequently updated.

8. An evaluation of the Policy regarding the enforcement of licensing conditions takes place and consideration is given to the inclusion of structured enforcement guidelines. Licensing conditions for Hackney Carriages and Private Hire are then reviewed every two years from January 2017.

Complete - The enforcement of taxi and private hire licensing was subject to an internal audit in November 2016. The outcome of the audit was process was a low risk rating with two recommendations about the frequency and documentation of flagging operations. The process of reviewing and updating taxi / private hire policies has begun with proposed new policies on vehicle age and emissions being drafted. A timetable for the review of other policies and conditions has been established with the aim of reviewing all relevant policies in the next two years.

9. At least an annual joint meeting between Hackney Carriage drivers, private hire drivers and the relevant Authorities, including NBC Licensing Officers, Northants Highways and the Police is held.

Complete – A meeting with all parties has been held and further meetings are planned in 2017.

10. Articles are placed in the press regarding the difference between Hackney Carriages and Private Hire; particularly around the Christmas period. Copies

of such articles are also forwarded to Community Groups and Residents' Associations.

Complete – A press release outlining this information was issued in December 2016.

11. A PR campaign, using social and conventional media is put in place to convey positive messages about the benefits of using taxis/ private hire vehicles and give information about complaint mechanisms. Existing contacts with the University of Northampton and Northampton College are used to share information through their information sharing processes.

Complete -This information is included in the Nights Out Northampton PR campaign.

12. Taxi Marshalls are introduced for a trial period of six months. The trial is then evaluated so that the success of Taxi Marshalls can be assessed.

Complete - Street Marshalls were introduced in July 2016 as a 1 year pilot as part of the Nights Out Northampton campaign. They cover every pay day weekend and key dates such as Halloween, Fresher's Week, Christmas Eve, New Years Eve etc.

Street Marshals provide an extra level of support to other agencies such as Northamptonshire Police and Street Pastors, also linking in with licensed premises door staff, helping to spot any developing issues for early intervention on low level disorder, and providing support to vulnerable people.

The Marshals also help to co-ordinate management of any queues for taxis as well as manage and, if required, report illegally parked or ranked taxis causing traffic flow issues, helping to ensure a swifter and more effective journey home for people at the end of a night out.

13. Consideration is given to the removal of the two plant pots in situ at the entrance of Kingswell Street in order that it could become a functional road to through traffic.

Complete – this is not possible as Northamptonshire Highways have indicated that this would have a detrimental effect on traffic flows in the town centre, particularly in College Street and The Drapery area.

14. It is recommended to Northamptonshire Highways that double red lines are introduced at Wood Hill.

Complete – It is not possible to use double red lines outside major cities. However no loading / unloading restrictions were introduced on one side of Wood Hill late in 2016.

15. Temporary full closures to traffic of Bridge Street are introduced on specific dates as identified by the Licensing Sergeant Northants Police.

Complete – Road closures have been implemented on key dates during the last year.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 Cabinet can choose to accept all the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny report.
- 3.3.2 Cabinet can choose to accept some of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny report. It will be noted that of the 15 recommendations of the report, 10 have been completed and 5 are in progress.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 By accepting the recommendations of the report, Cabinet agree to making changes to some of the operational policies relating to taxi and private hire vehicles, drivers and operators. These policies are subject to ongoing review to ensure that they are effective and enforced appropriately

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 Some of the recommendations of the report, including the carrying out of an unmet demand survey, and the consultation on a low emissions policy have financial implications. However in line with good practice guidance this is funded within existing budgets from income from the fees paid for taxi and private hire licences.
- 4.2.2 The recommendations of the report also promote the increased focus on licensing enforcement. This has been facilitated by the recent reorganisation within the team which places increased resource into front line enforcement activity.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 The recommendations of the report generally fall within existing policy. Where changes to licensing policies are required, in relation to the development of an emissions policy and the possible changes to the enforcement of licence conditions appropriate consultation will take place and any policy changes will be subject to approval by Licensing Committee.

4.4 Equality and Health

- 4.4.1 See attached Community Impact Assessment.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

Finance, Legal, Community Safety, Northants Police Licensing Team, NCC
Highways

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

- 4.6.1 The recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny report assist in the delivery of priority outcomes in the following ways.
- 4.6.2 The focus on the effective enforcement of licensing policies in relation to taxi and private hire assists in the delivery of the objective to invest in safer cleaner neighbourhoods by ensuring that visitors and residents can use taxis and private hire vehicles with the assurance that they are safe.
- 4.6.3 Effective enforcement supports the objective of making every £ go further by ensuring that the resources of the Council are targeted in the most effective way in the delivery of licensing policy
- 4.6.4 The delivery of a low emissions policy supports the objective of promoting the health and well being of the people of Northampton
- 4.6.5 The implementation of all of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny will provide effective enforcement of Licensing policy to respond to the needs of residents, businesses and visitors to Northampton.

4.7 Other Implications

- 4.7.1 None.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 Report of Scrutiny Panel 3 The effectiveness of enforcement of licensing policy in respect to taxi and private hire May 2016
- 5.2 Community Impact Assessment

Julie Seddon
Director of Customers and Communities
Ext7379