

Time commenced : 6.00 pm
Time finished : 7.05 pm

TAXI LICENSING AND APPEALS COMMITTEE
1 JUNE 2005

Present: Councillor Skelton (in the Chair)
Councillors P Berry, Dhamrait, Hird, Jackson, Jones, Redfern, Rehman
and Turner

01/05 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brown.

02/05 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

03/05 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

04/05 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

05/05 Request for Approval of a new Hackney Carriage (TW200)

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the Taxi Licensing section had recently received a request from John Paton and Son, the Glasgow based taxi retailer (in conjunction with CMAK UK, the Coventry taxi manufacturer), for the Council to approve their new vehicle, the TW200, for use as a licensed Hackney Carriage in the Derby City area. John Tomlinson reported that the vehicle had been examined by Licensing Officers and by an examiner at a specified testing station and had been found to meet all specification requirements apart from 'turning circle'. The turning circle element could only be met by purpose built 'London style' Hackney carriages and this requirement had previously been waived by this Committee for other approved vehicles. A small number of minor issues also remained to be resolved which related to seat heights and the type of wheelchair ramps.

Councillor Redfern asked if Mick Watts had been involved in the issues to do with Wheelchair ramps. John Tomlinson responded that the wheelchair ramp issue was not one of access but of securing mechanisms for health and safety reasons. If there was any question about the accessibility he would speak to Mick Watts. However members still felt that Mick Watts should be involved with this issue.

Resolved

- 1. to approve the Patons/CMAK TW200 for use as a Hackney Carriage within the City of Derby subject to the satisfactory completion of minor amendments to the design.**
- 2. to delegate to the Assistant Director – Environmental Health and Trading Standards, authority to approve any minor amendments required, prior to issuing final approval for licensing, and that Mick Watts – Access Officer, be consulted on issues with wheelchair ramps.**
- 3. to request the Director of Corporate Services to amend the Council's specification for Hackney Carriages to include the TW200.**

06/05 Update on Specified Testing Station

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services, giving an update on specified testing stations. Members were advised that the testing of licensed hackney carriages and private hire vehicles was undertaken by specified testing stations approved by this Committee. One of these testing stations, Arriva, had now withdrawn from the contract, leaving only two testing stations on the approved list. A third testing station was due to come 'on line' shortly, subject to the resolution of some outstanding health and safety issues at the premises. John Tomlinson advised the Committee that since the report had been drafted, another company had expressed an interest in becoming a specified testing station and officers were currently going through the specification with them.

Resolved to note the report.

07/05 Use of Mobile Phones by Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Drivers

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services advising that the Taxi Licensing section was receiving an increasing number of complaints about Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle drivers using mobile phones whilst driving. Some of these complaints originated from members of the public or other drivers, but many came from customers in the vehicle at the time of the incident, who were concerned about the public safety implications. Using a mobile phone while driving was an offence that was enforced by the police. Using a mobile phone while driving could put passengers at risk and it could be considered a breach of the licensing conditions. Licensing managers proposed a three stage enforcement approach:

- 1. on the first occasion when a complaint of 'using a mobile phone whilst driving' is received, the licensed driver would receive a written warning reminding them of their licence conditions and their duty of care to their passengers.**
- 2. on receipt of a second complaint, the driver would be requested to attend for an interview with licensing officers, where a verbal and a second written warning would be issued.**

3. if a third complaint was received against the driver, the matter would be referred to the Taxi Licensing Sub Committee, with a view to action being taken against their licence.

Councillor Jackson commented that she thought that officers were being unduly lenient as it was an offence to use mobile phones and drivers should not be given all these opportunities and the complaint should be brought straight to Committee.

Councillor Dhamrait stated that officers needed to educate the community that taxi drivers were not allowed to use mobile phones by putting stickers in cars. Councillor Redfern added that this should also be communicated to drivers.

Resolved

- 1. to approve the following enforcement approach if a driver is reported as having used a mobile phone whilst driving a Hackney Carriage or a Private Hire vehicle:**
 - If a complaint is received against the driver, the matter will be referred to the Taxi Licensing Sub Committee, with a view to action being taken against their licence.**

This enforcement approach included all mobile phones including blue tooth.

- 2. To inform drivers of the new enforcement approach by writing to every licensed driver with a copy to every operator base.**

08/05 Improved Vehicle Licence Plates for Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services, advising the Committee that currently all licence plates were ordered in bulk from an external supplier. These plates detailed only a licence number and the number of passengers that the vehicle was licensed to carry. If lost or stolen, there was the risk that such plates could be utilised on unlicensed vehicles, which might then ply for hire.

Following consultation and agreement with the taxi trade, licensing managers had identified and procured supplies of improved taxi licence plates for fitment to licensed vehicles. The plates, produced by a company named MOGO, could be produced in house in a couple of minutes. They were each specific to a particular licensed vehicle, as they contained details of the make and registration of the vehicle, in addition to the information on the existing licence plate. Most neighbouring authorities had adopted these (or similar) plates. Although the proposed plates did not yet carry licence expiry dates, it was proposed that in the medium term, these would be introduced as this would contribute towards increased public safety. However, a new plate would be required for each vehicle. The initial plates would be given to drivers free of charge, however, once the expiry dates were introduced, the charges would be recovered in the licensing fees.

Resolved

- 1. to note the report**
- 2. to agree to introduce the new style plates from 1 July 2005 and that the modified plates with expiry dates will be introduced from 1 July 2006.**
- 3. to approve an additional administration charge for the new plates from 1 July 2006 to be included in the licence fee.**
- 4. to authorise the Director of Corporate Services to amend the Council's vehicle licence conditions to incorporate the use of these new vehicle licence plates.**

MINUTES END