

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE – 20 NOVEMBER 2014

REPORT BY DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE FULL LICENSING COMMITTEE DATED 17 JULY 2014

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- To inform the Members of the Licensing Committee of the progress achieved following the recommendations made at the meeting on 17 July 2014.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSING COMMITTEE:</u> that	
(A)	The Committee considers the results of the full consultation with the hackney carriage and private hire licence holders, operators and other stakeholders; and
(B)	The Committee makes recommendations regarding which, if any, of the suggested changes be implemented.

1.0 Background

1.1 Following discussions at the July meeting of the Licensing Committee Officers were requested to consult with the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licence holders, operators and other stakeholders regarding two specific policy areas:

- The knowledge test
- Advertising on licensed vehicles

1.2 355 letters were sent out to the trade requesting their opinions on the areas identified but also requesting any other comments regarding the current policies. A copy of the letter can be found at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

1.3 In total 10 responses were received from the trade and these are attached to the report as **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. Unfortunately those that responded represent less than 3% of the

licensed trade.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 There are a number of opinions offered regarding the current **knowledge test** for Dual Driver applicants. Some wish the knowledge test to remain the same whilst other drivers ask that the test be made harder. Some of the responses comment that newer drivers are giving a bad impression of Hackney Carriage trade to the public. This comment must relate to those drivers that passed the 'old' verbal knowledge test prior to April 2014 when the new written knowledge test was introduced as only one driver has passed since then.
- 2.2 Officers believe that the pass rate of the new written knowledge tests means that drivers will have to obtain significant knowledge in order to pass. Officers would be happy to provide a comparison of the pass rate between the old knowledge test and the new knowledge test for the Licensing Committee at the meeting in March 2015. This will allow the new test to operate for a year and it can then be reviewed.
- 2.3 Opinions differ between responses from the Hackney Carriage trade and the Private Hire trade regarding the introduction of a knowledge test for Private Hire drivers. The Hackney Carriage trade mainly think that there should be a knowledge test or at least a test of points of interest but the Private Hire trade feel that due to the pre-booked nature of their jobs it is not necessary.
- 2.4 Officers would seek guidance from the Licensing Committee with regards to how they would like Officers to proceed in relation to the existing Dual Driver knowledge test and the possibility of introducing a test for Private Hire driver applicants.
- 2.5 Opinion was again divided with regards to **advertising** on licensed vehicles. One response included the example of the types of wording likely to be requested and confirmed that the rear window advert would be clear other than the lettering. Unfortunately none of the responses make a specific request regarding location, size and types of adverts that should be allowed under the policy.
- 2.6 One response suggests that all over advertising should be allowed in a similar way to Hackney Carriages operating in London.

- 2.7 Unless Members feel that they have enough information to make a decision regarding advertising today, and in the absence of a specific proposal from the trade, Officers suggest that examples of other authorities policies could be collated and a proposal put together for consideration.
- 2.8 The letter sent to the licensed trade also requested comments and suggestions in relation to the **Licensing Record Points Scheme** which Officers have been requested to review. The opinions included in the responses and from the previous Taxi Workshops will be fed into the review which is being undertaken by Robin Clark (Licensing Enforcement and Community Safety Manager) and the Licensing Enforcement Team.
- 2.9 Officers were also instructed to review the **rank** provision within the District. Contact has been made with the relevant Officers at the County Council and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the locations proposed by the trade as part of the Taxi Workshops. As part of these discussions Officers will be seeking assurance that any development of the Bircherley Green site will not impact on the provision of rank space in Railway Street.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None.

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