

WASTE, RECYCLING, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 7TH FEBRUARY, 2013

Present – Councillors Irving (Chairman), Sherrington (Vice-Chairman), Chadwick, Critchley (as deputy for Councillor A. S. Walsh), Darvesh, Donaghy, Peel, Radlett and Wild.

Officers

Mr. M. Cox	Director of Environmental Services
Ms. L. Duckworth	Group Manager Environmental Health and Food Control
Mr. I. D. Mulholland	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Irving in the Chair

26. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th January, 2013 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

27. HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENCES – REVIEW OF RESTRICTION OF NUMBERS AND UNMET DEMAND SURVEY

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report which set out details of the comments received into the report commissioned into unmet demand in relation to hackney carriage vehicles in Bolton.

By way of background information, the report explained that in July, 2012 the Executive Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Skills approved the commissioning of an unmet demand survey to determine whether the Council's decision to restrict the numbers of hackney carriage vehicle licences remained appropriate. The limit to the current number was set at 110 with two plates not issued.

The report went onto explain the main details of the findings which included –

- demand was being met at ranks within the Town;
- a public survey showed that 67% of respondents had used a licensed vehicle in Bolton in the last three months. The survey also showed that hackney carriage usage levels were low and knowledge of ranks was poor;

- over 400 members of the public were surveyed and the main issue identified was the need for a better service; and
- supermarkets and hotels said they mainly used private hire vehicles.

The report went on to explain that the Trade had also been consulted and 85% of the drivers considered retaining the limit was right for the area. There was though support for more ranks and better advertising of existing ranks.

In conclusion, it was highlighted that –

- there was no evidence of unmet demand with the fleet operating with 108 vehicles;
- demand for hackney carriages had fallen to 4,100 passengers in a typical week, compared to 9,000 in 2003;
- hackney carriage ranks and vehicles did not appear to be visible enough; and
- driver standards needed to be improved.

The report also set out details of the key recommendations from the commissioned report.

Members in their discussions referred to-

- matters around a possible need for a rank at the hospital;
- hackney drivers having a good knowledge of the Town;
- issues around possible service improvements and perhaps there was a need for additional data in this regard;
- wheelchair usage;
- the driver test process including the customer care issue;
- matters around the Oldham star rating scheme;
- issues around rank numbers in the Town Centre;
- the use of private hire vehicles by hotels and supermarkets;
- knowledge of which vehicles had disabled facilities;
- information regarding charges on the web site including disabled facilities;
- the good record of hackney carriage drivers in terms of offences and the upkeep of vehicles;
- the use of mystery shoppers;
- the hours driver work; and
- drivers knowledge of destinations.

It was agreed – (i) That the Executive Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Skills be asked to consider the report and agree to the retention of the restriction of the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences and this be now set at 108.

(ii) That prior to the report being submitted to the the meeting of the Executive Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Skills, further consideration be given to the discussions of members of the Group , as set out above, in particular in relation to the exploration of a possible rank at the hospital, issues around the possible service improvements that could be made and matters around wheelchair usage.

(The meeting started at 5.30pm and finished at 6.12pm.)