

MINUTES of the meeting of The Licensing Committee held on 28 March 2007 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Emma Woods (Chair), John Everett (substitute for Councillor Ben Maney), Peter Harris and Mrs Margaret Jones

Apologies: Councillors Ben Maney (Vice-Chair), Robert Gledhil and Neil Rockliffe

In attendance: Phil Eastal – Team Leader, Regulatory Services
Peter Coates – Licensing Officer
David Lawson –Solicitor
Beverlee Clarke – Senior Democratic Services Officer

20. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 30 January 2007, were approved as a correct record.

21. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised the Committee that she had not agreed to the consideration of any items of urgent business.

22. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

23. RESTRICTIONS ON THE LIVERY OF LICENSED HACKNEY CARRIAGES

In introducing the report it was advised that Thurrock Council had never before tried to control the liveries of the hackney carriages it licensed, leaving the choice of colour to the licensed proprietor of the vehicle. Furthermore it was advised that other authorities had chosen to adopt a particular livery to assist the travelling public in identifying hackney carriages as confusion can be caused between private hire vehicles and taxis. Members of the public were not always aware that private hire vehicles were not available for immediate hire and that their drivers could not be hailed.

It was pointed out that Thurrock Council's hackney carriages currently had a roof mounted 'TAXI' sign, yellow door signs stating "Thurrock Council Licensed Taxi" "This vehicle can ply for hire", yellow taxi licence plates at the front and rear and an internally mounted licence detail card in the front windscreen.

It was also noted that the rules had recently been relaxed to allow for vehicle advertising and that this decision might need to be reviewed should members decide to introduce the requirement for specific livery colours.

In discussing the proposal, which had been instigated by the Chair of the Committee, Members raised the fact that they were committed to a corporate image and that those particular colours, dark green and gold, would aid in identification. It was believed that these identifiable colours could assist people with visual impairments or those who had reading difficulties. It was agreed that the main advantage would be that people would be able to distinguish the type of vehicle at a distance.

Some concern was raised over access. Councillor Mrs Jones requested that as a future agenda item, the Committee discuss the topic of wheelchair access as she had found that some people with physical disabilities were often unable to climb into the higher vehicles, specifically designated and that a saloon type car was often more appropriate.

Members discussed their concerns over the costing of such an exercise, which would rest with the licence holder and were in agreement with the recommendation that the proposal should go to consultation, with particular attention to be given to the views from members of the Taxi Driver's Association, as this proposal could support them in light of the great improvements that had been made in the industry over the past 10 years.

A time line was discussed, taking into account the life span of the vehicle, the length of time a licence was issued for and whether an owner had been licensed for some time or was quite new to the industry. It was agreed that the consultation should canvass views on what might be a suitable 'lead-in time', for instance, whether the licence condition be added on the occasion of the next licence renewal; whether existing vehicles could be allowed to continue as they are until their useful life as taxis expired; or whether the requirement should be made mandatory for existing licensed vehicles after four years had passed.

The recommendations outlined in the report were moved by Councillor Mrs Jones and seconded by Councillor Harris, with the Committee in unanimous agreement.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Head of Strategy, Environment and Development Services consult with relevant parties on a proposal to amend the 'Vehicle Specification for Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles' in order to introduce a requirement for the exterior bodywork of vehicles to be of certain colours.**
- ii) To report the results of the consultation to a future meeting of the Committee with a view to revising the vehicle specification.**
- iii) That the topic of accessibility with regards Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles, be raised at a future meeting.**

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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or alternatively e-mail bclarke@thurrock.gov.uk**