

# LICENSING COMMITTEE

14 May 2012

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Brandis (Chairman); Councillors Mrs Blake, Mrs Bloom, Hawkett, Huxley, Lambert, Mills, Mrs Phipps, Mrs Renshell, Mrs Roberts, Sir Beville Stanier and Vick.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Cooper, Douglas-Bate and Jarvis

## 1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of 14 November, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

## 2. COUNCIL'S LIMITATION POLICY IN RESPECT TO AYLESBURY TOWN

For a number of years the Council had limited the number of hackney carriages serving Aylesbury Town to fifty. Outside of the town hackney carriages were not limited and there were currently fourteen serving the rest of the Vale. Hackney Carriages in Aylesbury Town were black purpose built taxis displaying a white plate and in the rest of the Vale they were white purpose built taxis with red plates.

Section 16 of the Transport Act, 1985, permitted the Council to limit the number of Hackney Carriages provided the Council were satisfied that there was no significant unmet demand. The Department of Transport recommended that a review of quantity restriction policies be carried out by the Council every three years.

The last review had been carried out in 2008 which had concluded that the retention of the limit to fifty on white plated hackney carriages would be in the best interests to the current users and the trade. Another survey should have been carried out in 2011, however Members had agreed to defer it, as circumstances had not changed in any meaningful way since 2008. Licensing Services had appointed a consultant, CTS Traffic and Transportation to carry out a "Health Check" rather than a full survey. A copy of their report had been attached as an appendix to the officer's report.

CTS had also recommended that an independent review of the policy should be undertaken either in 2014 or when any of the following developments were completed:

- Completion of the new housing near Aylesbury Vale Parkway
- Completion of the Waterside Development
- If any new nightclubs were proposed within Aylesbury Town centre.

Meetings with the Aylesbury Hackney Carriage Association and observations of Taxi Ranks indicated that there continued to be no unmet demand. The only peak demand is for a few hours on a Saturday night. The Association had also requested that the next survey be deferred until 2015, in order, amongst other things, to see a return on money invested in their vehicles and training of drivers.

Three members of Aylesbury Hackney Carriage Association attended the meeting and answered questions put to them by Members regarding their concerns. The trade felt that it would take at least two years to see an upturn in the economy, hence their request for a delay in the survey until 2015.

Members also raised concerns regarding discreet plates, prices charged or over charged by private hire vehicles, amalgamation of zones during the time of the Olympics/Paralympics, the boundary of Aylesbury Town and whether it could be altered to take in new housing estates, private hire companies still incorporating the word "taxi" or similar in the signage on their vehicles or in their advertising, and signage at the ranks.

It was confirmed that although there had been an increase in the number of drivers having discreet or executive plates, extra conditions had been placed on the licences. The private hire business was exhausted, and businesses starting up were moving into niche roles which required this type of plate.

The Council had no control over fares charged by private hire operators, but acknowledged there had been a "price war" amongst some operators.

It would be impossible legally to incorporate the two zones for the duration of the Olympics/Paralympics. It was also impossible legally to alter the boundary of Aylesbury Town as this had been set in 1974 with the formation of Aylesbury Vale District Council and followed the original boundary of Aylesbury Borough Council. There was no law to create zones so therefore no power to change it.

Private Hire firms had been informed about the wording in the signage etc. of their vehicles. It had been agreed that the wording would be changed when the licence came up for renewal.

As for better signage at the ranks, a meeting would be arranged between the Chairman of Licensing and the Cabinet Member for Civic Amenities to look into this. AVDC's Civil Enforcement Officers were now working with the Licensing Team and could liaise with Bucks County Council regarding vehicles other than taxis parking on the ranks.

## RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Health be asked to defer a full unmet demand survey until the end of 2014, for the reasons as outlined in the report.

- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Health be asked to maintain the limit of 50 Hackney Carriages in Aylesbury Town until the outcomes of the unmet demand survey in 2014 were decided upon.