
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
LICENSING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2023

Present: Councillors M Bunday (Chair), Mrs Blatchford, Kenny, Noon, Powell-Vaughan and A Frampton

Apologies: Councillors Beaurain, Whitbread and Windle

1. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED that:

Councillor Blatchford be elected as Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2023/2024.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED: that the minutes for the meeting on 29 November 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

RESOLVED: that the minutes for the meeting on 7 December 2022 be approved subject to correction of a spelling mistake and signed as a correct record.

3. **HACKNEY CARRIAGE UNMET DEMAND SURVEY**

The Committee considered the report of the Service Manager, Licensing seeking a decision on whether to retain, amend or abandon the cap on the number of hackney carriage licences.

In attendance were Phil Bates, Service Manager Licensing, Mr Hall and Mr Johnson who, with consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

RESOLVED:

To continue to restrict the number of licensed hackney carriages to 283.

The Committee noted that observations, surveys and public views had indicated there was no significant unmet demand. It noted some pressure as expected at peak times, such as when cruise ships were in Southampton, and that most existing licenced hackney carriages were on the road.

The Committee encouraged all licensed drivers to note the comments from the public contained in the survey.

The Committee received legal advice that issues concerning the livelihoods of existing licensed drivers could not be taken into account when making this decision.

4. **PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE, PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER AND PRIVATE HIRE OPERATOR CONDITIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Licensing Manager seeking amendments to the private hire conditions to licenses for private hire vehicles, private hire drivers and private hire operators to enable the removal of the requirements to display operator details.

In attendance were Phil Bates, Service Manager Licensing, Russell Hawkins, Senior Licensing Officer, Simon May, CEO Radio Taxis, Mr Rahman, Ali Haydor, GMB Representative, Ian Hall, Abdul Mohammad, Perry MacMillan and Clive Johnson and a member of the public who, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

RESOLVED:

To adopt in their entirety the amended conditions as detailed in the report to the different private hire licences (Appendices 1 to 3).

The Committee noted the livery requirement had been established due to public safety concerns with support from the trade and that the policy would be monitored and subject to review by licensing officers, the Taxi Forum, trade representatives and unions.

The Committee had last reviewed private hire conditions in 2021 and noted the subsequent changes in practice of some drivers using an app which resulted in them being able to work for more than one operator at a time. Consultation demonstrated general, though not universal, support for the recommendation.

The Committee discussed the recommendation that the requirement to display the name of the operator on the vehicle door sticker should therefore be removed and that the safety of the public should be protected by adding a condition to drivers' licences that no bookings should be cancelled without reasonable cause and by adding a condition to operators' licences that unnecessary cancellations, complaints or safeguarding concerns should be recorded and shared with the licensing authority. Should vehicles display the name of an operator then the driver would not be able to take bookings from other operators in that vehicle.

The Committee noted that pursuant to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 operators were under an existing duty to ensure that any member of the public should be collected if a driver cancelled. Operators would be provided with suggestions for ways to mitigate cancellations.

The Committee noted that if a driver were in breach of their licence the Sub-Committee could consider whether that driver was a fit and proper person.

The Committee was advised that the method of communication between operators and licensing officers will be refined. It was noted that operators had experience that many drivers would not accept pre bookings for small fares and that operators would need to see whether allowing drivers to work for multiple operators at the same time might affect the ability to predict availability for bookings.

It was noted that the door stickers would have to be replaced when licences were being renewed. Drivers could choose to change the sticker earlier.

5. **REMOTE HEARING PROCEDURE**

The Committee considered the report of Executive Director of Place seeking adoption of a remote hearing procedure note for Licensing (Licensing and Gambling) Sub-Committee hearings.

In attendance were Phil Bates, Service Manager Licensing, who with the consent of the Chair addressed the meeting.

RESOLVED:

To adopt the procedure note.

The Committee noted the ability to hold meetings as hybrid meetings or in person meetings if they were complex or involved multiple witnesses at the discretion of the Chair and legal advisor.