

Runnymede Borough Council

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

15 January 2020 at 7.30pm

Members of the

Committee Present: Councillors D Cotty (Chairman), T Burton, D Clarke and J Furey.

Members of the

Committee absent: Councillor E Gill (Vice-Chairman)

437 FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Committee noted the Fire Precautions.

438 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 November 2019 were signed as a correct record.

439 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor E Gill.

440 HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY 2020 – 2023

The Committee's approval was sought of an updated Licensing Policy for Hackney Carriages and Private Hire.

Officers reported the outcome of a public consultation on the revised policy conducted between 1 October to 10 December 2019. There were 90 responders to the consultation; a mixture of general public, the trade and others which the Committee considered a good result.

The Committee reviewed each of the questions asked in the consultation and noted the responses and Officer comments thereon.

Members discussed the merits or otherwise of the Knowledge Test for Private Hire Drivers and whether it was a bar to new drivers or evidence that being licensed with Runnymede gave confidence to the public that drivers were not relying on sat navs and had a good geographical knowledge of the borough. Although 52.9% of respondees were in favour of removing the knowledge test, Officers on balance recommended keeping it to maintain standards and public confidence. It would however be kept under review and monitored in conjunction with the development of app based companies who it was known used sat navs as a matter of course.

The other recommendations in the revised policy were summarised as:

- To require drivers to sign up to the DBS update service whenever they had a 3 yearly check
- To ensure seatbelts were in clean and excellent condition
- Any tinted windows or replacement glass to comply with construction and use regulations
- Lamps and reflectors to be in good condition with no signs of damage or lens deterioration

- Lifting equipment, ramps and restraints fitted to wheelchair accessible vehicles to meet stated standards and specifications
- Conditions regarding the use of run flat tyres, space savers tyres and tyre repair kits
- Hackney carriage 'for hire' roof lights fitted at all times
- Knowledge test for drivers and existing operators
- Revised record keeping requirements and conditions
- An additional condition that the operator's base is situated within the borough
- Private Hire operators to notify the Council or Police of complaints of a criminal nature

In addition, Officers had included two questions regarding child safety in vehicles and it was discussed whose responsibility it should be to provide suitable booster seats and/or other restraints. Members agreed that it was advisable not to go beyond legislative requirements but to remind drivers and operators to ask passengers pre-hire to provide suitable seats/restraints for children in their care. This could be done by way of the Taxi newsletter issued regularly by the Licensing section.

There was a discussion regarding app based companies and what could be done to promote local drivers who were being adversely affected by the competition. The issue of standards and safety were important factors to consider. Officers confirmed that they were conducting useful enforcement exercises jointly with Transport for London.

With regard to equalities, Members welcomed the proposal to look at requiring drivers to undergo disability awareness training. Officers would submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee and also consider the suggestion of producing a sticker for drivers to display in their vehicles when trained which would enhance the Runnymede brand.

Officers had, since issuing the draft policy identified some minor amendments which would be made before the final policy was issued. It was agreed that the policy should be valid until 31 March 2023, to bring it into line with other departmental policies.

The Licensing Section was thanked for their work and it was agreed that having a policy provided Officers and the trade with clear boundaries and justification for decisions made in taxi licensing while also giving flexibility to depart from policy where appropriate.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the Hackney carriage and private Hire Licensing Policy 2020 – 2023, as amended, be approved to be effective from 2 March 2020 until 31 March 2023.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.05pm)