

Runnymede Borough CouncilREGULATORY COMMITTEE17 March 2021 at 7.30pm on MS Teams

Members of the Committee Present: Councillors D Cotty (Chairman), D Clarke (Vice-Chairman), T Burton and M Harnden

Members of the Committee Absent: Councillor J Furey

Councillors L Gillham and J Olorenshaw also attended the meeting.

505 **Chairman's Announcement**

The Chairman briefly explained the protocol for the meeting being conducted on Teams.

506 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record. As the meeting was being held remotely via Microsoft Teams, these would be signed when the Chairman was physically able to do so.

507 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were recorded for Councillor J Furey.

508 **Statutory Guidance in relation to Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards**

The Committee's approval was sought to go out to public consultation on two matters relating to the licensing of Taxi and Private Hire vehicles.

Members recalled that an information report had been circulated in December 2020 to invite any comments prior to consideration of the consultation document on Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

There were nine areas which Officers recommended were included in the consultation exercise for compliance with the statutory guidance, noting that a cohesive and comprehensive policy on Taxi and Private Hire licensing was introduced in 2016 and was widely available to both the public and trade. Officers confirmed that not all Councils currently had a policy. Therefore, it was pleasing to note this was recommended by the Guidance which also suggested that policies should be reviewed every 5 years and the Council currently reviewed it every 3 years. It was agreed Officers would consult on this proposed review change.

Officers also proposed to reduce the time for licence holders to report having an arrest and release, charge or conviction for any sexual offence, an offence involving dishonesty, violence and any motoring offence from 5 working days (3 working days for another type of arrest) to 48 hours. Some Members considered this might be difficult to comply with. However, Officers assured the Committee that each case would be treated on its merits should a person be unable to report a matter within 48 hours.

With regard to criminality checks for drivers Officers advised that currently the Council did not make a specific reference to not licensing people that appeared on the barred lists from

the DBS. In practice such persons would not be licensed but Members agreed it would be sensible to update the policy to make this clear.

Members discussed the issue of language proficiency. It was agreed that a certain knowledge of the English language was required to do the 'Knowledge test' although it did not have a verbal element. Feedback suggested no complaints had been received, nor was there a demand for it but including it in the consultation might illicit some views on the subject. Members wished to encourage new drivers and considered that an English language test might be off putting if drivers and their customers could sufficiently converse to transact the service.

The Committee agreed Officers should consult on a small change to the policy to require a DBS check from vehicle proprietors, who were not drivers or operators and to make it a condition of licensing that all operators had an annual basic DBS check instead of on application and thereafter every 3 years.

With regard to record keeping, Members were content for the trade to be consulted on keeping a register of all staff taking bookings or dispatching vehicles. This would also increase confidence in public safety.

Officers advised that the Guidance proposed adding a restriction that holders of a passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) should not be able to use a public service vehicle (PSV) for a private hire booking unless the booker had given their informed consent. Members were content with this recommendation.

The Committee discussed whether CCTV should be mandatory in taxi and private hire vehicles. The Guidance suggested that if there were local circumstances that warranted it, then it should be considered in the interests of public safety but taking into account privacy issues. Members considered it was appropriate to include this in the consultation.

With regard to tinted windows this did not form part of the Guidance but had always been a topic of interest to the trade. Officers had introduced the policy in March 2017 and had consulted on it in 2020. There had been very few responses, but Officers were aware that a number of the trade objected to it because it was costly to replace their windows with untinted ones or only partially tinted windows to meet the criteria. Members discussed the issues of public safety and affordability, concluding it was appropriate to consult on this issue once again. Officers would be pro-active in encouraging drivers and operators to respond to the consultations.

The Committee noted the legal and equality implications in the report and that a screening assessment would be carried out if necessary when reporting back on the results of the consultations in June.

RESOLVED that –

- i) a consultation exercise on the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards be approved; and**
- ii) a consultation exercise on Runnymede's Policy on tinted windows be approved.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.54pm)