

Department for Transport Draft Best Practice Guidance and Consultation in relation to Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing (Environmental Services, Robert Smith)

Synopsis of report:

To inform Members of the Department for Transport's Draft Best Practice Guidance and Consultation in relation to Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing.

Recommendation(s):

- i) **Members note the contents of the Draft Best Practice Guidance; and**
- ii) **the response from Runymede Borough Council to the Draft Best Practice Guidance be approved**

1. Context of report

- 1.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) has issued best practice guidance ('Guidance') on taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing since 2006 to assist local authorities that have responsibility for the regulation of this sector. The DfT last published Best Practice Guidance for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles (PHV) licensing authorities in 2010.
- 1.2 In order to keep the 'Guidance' relevant and up to date the Department has revised it and has commenced a consultation exercise which is open until 20 June 2022. The 'Guidance' is available on the Council's website sitting alongside the agenda as it runs to some 99 pages.
- 1.3 The recommendations in the consultation version of the best practice guidance result from engagement and discussion with a range of bodies including representatives of licensing authorities, regulators, operators and drivers, and detailed consideration by DfT.
- 1.4 The consultation contains a set of recommendations on what local authorities should and should not require. It also includes information on existing legal obligations that licensing authorities are already required to meet. This is to provide as comprehensive a document as possible to assist them in administering the licensing regime.
- 1.5 A copy of the consultation paper with Officers' draft response is included at Appendix 'A'. The previous 'Guidance' was welcomed by licensing authorities and was taken into account in the construction of Runnymede's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.
- 1.6 However it is for individual licensing authorities to reach their own decisions both on overall policies and on individual licensing matters in light of their own views of the relevant considerations; the 'Guidance' is intended to assist licensing authorities in following Best Practice recommendations.

- 1.7 Within the draft 'Guidance' the Committee is asked to note that the term 'taxi' is used, this is referring to 'hackney carriage(s)' whether that be vehicle or driver.

2. **Report**

- 2.1 The consultation paper comprises some 62 separate areas of questions or comments and also sets out the rationale for the proposed position. The majority of subjects covered are fairly non controversial and straight forward. In addition, many of the responses proposed are in line with our existing policy and are very unlikely to generate debate.
- 2.2 In order to ensure the most contentious issues raised by the consultation are discussed Members are asked to focus their attention on questions within the following areas –

Driver proficiency Q17 – 20
Driver licensing Q24 – 26
Vehicle safety ratings Q27

- 2.3 For Runnymede the requirements for 'tinted windows' and 'knowledge tests' within the consultation co-incidentally arise at the same time we were reviewing these areas of our policy. They are the subject of reports earlier on in this agenda to be determined prior to this particular report on the 'Guidance'. Our response to these areas will be added to the consultation.

3. **Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 In many areas Runnymede has already meet the recommendations of the 'Guidance' and in fewer areas there is room for change which may be subject of further reports following publication of the final version of the 'Guidance'.

4. **Equality implications**

- 4.1 Any changes to Runnymedes policy following publication of the revised 'Guidance' would be subject of a further report and Equality impact screening assessment if required.

5. **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 5.1 The draft 'Guidance' at 8.48 – 8.53 mentions environmental considerations. One of the biggest challenges facing the taxi and private hire trade is the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles and the transition to zero emissions. The accesibility of on street chargers and alternative fuels is limited at the moment although this will in time improve. Therefore, any policy decision on vehicle emissions in the future must be realistic and achievable.

6. **Conclusions**

- 6.1 The revised Best Practice Guidance for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles are long overdue and very welcome. They provide some commonality countrywide. However, there are many other areas of the taxi licensing

regime which remain problematic and it is hoped that further changes may be forthcoming.
(To resolve)

Background papers

Runnymede Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/572/hackney-carriage-and-private-hire-licensing-policy>