

COMMITTEE:	CABINET
DATE:	7th NOVEMBER 2002
SUBJECT:	SCRUTINY OF TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE SERVICE
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
Ward(s):	All
Purpose:	To enable Cabinet to consider the findings and the proposed action plan produced by officers to develop the way forward identified by Scrutiny Committee.
Contact:	Gary Stevenson, Head of Environmental Health, Telephone 01323 415 360 or internally on extension 5360.
Recommendations:	It is recommended that Cabinet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Endorse the findings and way forward identified by the Scrutiny Committee Task Group and; 2) Agrees the proposed actions for consideration by Licensing Panel.

1.0	<u>Introduction</u>
1.1	The agreed annual scrutiny programme included an item on Taxi and Private Hire services.
1.2	To take the matter forward a Task Group comprising of Councillor Lacey, as Chairman, and Councillor Mrs Pooley was formed to hear individual representations from a range of interested parties. The Head of Environmental Health attended the sessions to take notes to facilitate the production of the final report and to provide additional information or clarification as required.

1.3	The report of the Task Group was considered and agreed by Scrutiny Committee on 16 th September 2002. The issues and way forward identified by the Task Group are set out in the table at Appendix 1.
1.4	Following Scrutiny Committee a number of actions have been developed to take forward the issues raised by the Task Group and these are also set out in Appendix 1 for consideration.
2.0	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Constitutional Responsibility for Licensing Functions</u></p>
2.1	Under the terms of the Council’s constitution, Licensing Panel has “responsibility to consider and determine all the Council’s functions with respect to licensing within policy guidelines set by the Council where either such powers or duties fall outside the delegated authority of the relevant Head of Service, or where it is the recommendation of the relevant Head of Service that a licence be refused or revoked.”
2.2	Therefore the action plan, subject to any changes put forward by Cabinet will also need to be considered by Licensing Panel and any proposed changes to policy be agreed by Full Council.
3.0	<u>Consultations</u>
3.1	The Scrutiny Committee Task Group undertook consultation with a range of stakeholders in the formulation of the their report. A copy of the final report was sent to each participant and a number addressed the Scrutiny Committee meeting. No further consultation has been undertaken in the development of the proposed actions.
4.0	<u>Implications</u>

4.1	There are no direct implications from this report. However, detailed implications would need to be considered by Licensing Panel should a change in policy be recommended.
5.0	<u>Summary</u>
5.1	A Scrutiny Committee Task Group has interviewed a number of stakeholder representatives to identify improvements that could be made to the taxi and private hire service provided in the Borough. This report proposes a number of actions to implement the improvements for Cabinet to consider both the matter is reported to Licensing Panel
Gary Stevenson – Head of Environmental Health	
<p>Background Papers:</p> <p>The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee Report: September 2002</p> <p>http://eastbourne.gov.uk/reports/docs/scrutiny~16-09-02~report~04.htm</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee Minutes: September 2002</p> <p>http://eastbourne.gov.uk/reports/docs/scrutiny~16-09-02~minutes-public~00.htm</p> <p>To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.</p>	
(document ref)gms\reports\cabinet nov 2002 - scrutinty	of taxi and private hire service.doc

Issue	Finding	Way Forward	Proposed action and timescale
<p><u>1. Vehicle Livery</u></p> <p>Current policy of all vehicles being white in colour.</p>	<p>The policy continues to meet the objectives set by the Council in 1997 and received support from all parties.</p>	<p>No change proposed</p>	<p>None required.</p>
<p>1.1</p> <p>Type and size of door signs and the information displayed</p>	<p>The use of door signs is an integral part of the vehicle livery policy and provides one element of the differentiation required between taxis and private hire vehicles. However there are regular sightings of hackney carriages not wearing them.</p> <p>To assist passenger identification of a vehicle, additional information could be incorporated into the sign.</p> <p>The introduction of signs that are permanently attached to the vehicle is opposed.</p>	<p>Consider designs for magnetic door signs that:</p> <p>incorporate the vehicle licence number</p> <p>insert the wording Prior Bookings Only into door signs for private hire vehicles, and for</p> <p>Multi Purpose Vehicles, signs that are more in proportion with vehicle size.</p> <p>Associations to ensure that their members comply with the livery</p> <p>Explore enforcement measures to ensure that door signs are displayed at all times on vehicles, for example permanently applied signs after 3 warnings.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager (Environmental Health) to produce a range of design options for consideration by Licensing Panel.</p> <p>May 2003</p> <p>Commercial Services Manager to work with Legal Services Manager to identify possible enforcement mechanisms.</p> <p>June 2003</p>

<p><u>2. Driver security</u></p> <p>2.1</p> <p>The need to protect and support drivers, particularly those operating at night.</p>	<p>Driver security was one of the key concerns cited in relation to working at night. One association has proposed the implementation of in-car CCTV and a scheme is currently being developed for approval</p> <p>The trade are keen to receive the support of Sussex Police in relation to passengers not paying the fare and attacks/threats to drivers</p>	<p>Bring forward a scheme for the introduction and control of in-car CCTV to Licensing Panel as soon as is possible.</p> <p>The Trade to contact Sussex Police with their concerns and Council Officers to raise the issue via the relevant working group of the Eastbourne Crime Reduction Partnership.</p> <p>The Task Group wishes to see a more robust response from Sussex Police.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager to finalise a scheme to enable the appropriate installation and operation of CCTV systems for consideration by Licensing Panel.</p> <p>November 2002</p> <p>At Scrutiny Committee Chief Inspector Stevens stated that response to taxi and private hire services would be addressed in the near future and proposed to arrange a meeting to discuss those matters in further detail with the Taxi and Private Hire providers in Eastbourne.</p>
<p><u>3. Use of Bus Lanes</u></p> <p>3.1</p> <p>Terminus Road</p>	<p>The taxis and Private Hire trades identified the benefits of being able to pick up and drop of passengers in Terminus Road.</p> <p>The issue has been considered and rejected at this time by the Highways Authority due to the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. Further consideration will be given when traffic calming measures are implemented at Bankers Corner</p>	<p>The Task Group wishes this item to be reconsidered in line with proposed changes.</p> <p>(Note: The Highways Manager advises that the measures to improve safety by reducing traffic speed at Bankers Corner is scheduled for 2004/05, subject to funding availability.</p>	<p>Highways Manager to reconsider the position when measures to reduce traffic speed at Bankers Corner are implemented.</p>

<p>4. Meters</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>Testing the accuracy of vehicle/meter</p> <p>set ups and correct calculation of hackney carriage fares</p>	<p>The Council sets the maximum rates that can be used for hackney carriage fares in the Borough but is not able to control private hire fares. This situation results in different meter/vehicle testing requirements. For hackney carriages, each vehicle and its meter needs to be tested over a distance of six miles. It is accepted that each meter chip should be identical but this does not overcome the need to test the set up of vehicle. The six-mile distance is required to check on the new progressive rate, which comes in at 5 miles.</p> <p>For private hire vehicles the only requirement is for the vehicle/meter set up to be tested for accuracy over one mile</p>	<p>Implement the use of rolling road facilities to undertake the test and provide a comprehensive record for each vehicle.</p>	<p>Test Stations have been identified and arrangements to undertake tests are being finalised.</p> <p>November 2002</p> <p>Private Hire vehicle meters to be tested at least once a year or at the time of any fare change. Meters in all new vehicles to be tested.</p> <p>June 2003</p>
<p>5. Fares</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>Time taken to consider fare applications</p>	<p>The process to consider fare change applications is a lengthy one involving a significant amount of time on behalf of the Hackney Trade representatives, Councillors and Officers.</p> <p>However, the justification for fare increases and the impact of changes to the tariff structure do have to be clearly understood.</p> <p>The use of data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) relating to changes in average earnings, fuel and other running costs should be taken into account.</p>	<p>Develop proposals for the use of ONS data in the consideration of future fare applications.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager to identify indices from the ONS data for Licensing Panel to agree as relevant and appropriate for use in considering future fare levels.</p> <p>February 2003</p>
<p>5.2</p> <p>Structure of the tariffs</p> <p>Introduction of the progressive rate.</p>	<p>The structure of the tariff gives rise to a complex position that passengers find difficult to understand.</p> <p>There is a mixed view as to whether the night time hackney carriage fare increases approved and implemented in October 2001 has succeeded in supporting the Council's</p>	<p>The impact of the increases in fares and the introduction of the progressive rate should be monitored.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to a simplified day/night tariff structure.</p> <p>Support a fares structure that is designed to increase the number of taxis plying</p>	<p>The Licensing Team will continue to monitor the level of complaints and passenger feedback received by the Council in relation to fares and to take the findings into account when considering future tariff and fare changes.</p> <p>Options for a simplified tariff structure which encourages more taxi</p>

<p><u>6. Level of service to customers</u></p> <p>6.1</p> <p>Length of time to locate/hire a vehicle, particularly at night.</p>	<p>During the night-time period, particularly at theatre, pub and club closing times the delays in obtaining a vehicle appear to be excessive. This is to the detriment to of the night time economy and creates the potential of town centre disturbance as people either wait for a vehicle or decide to walk home.</p>	<p>Encourage the trade to operate more vehicles at night.</p> <p>Consider issuing additional hackney carriage licences as below</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager will continue to work with the trade to explore ways of encouraging drivers to work nights.</p> <p>See next action below.</p>
<p>6.2</p> <p>Availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles</p>	<p>The availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles appears not to meet the needs of local residents. This concurs with the findings of the Hackney Carriage Study undertaken by Halcrow Fox on behalf of the Council between November 1999 and February 2002 which concluded that:</p> <p>there appears to be a shortage of wheelchair accessible vehicles and those that are available are often not available to the mobility impaired.</p> <p>there is a case for the issuing of any new licences for wheelchair accessible vehicles only, to ensure a greater mix of vehicle types and provide a greater choice for mobility impaired customers.</p> <p>The Study was reported to the Planning And Licensing Committee on 4th April 2000 which resolved not to issue further hackney carriage licences at that time.</p>	<p>Consider issuing a number of additional hackney carriage licences subject to conditions that will require the new vehicles to be wheelchair accessible. The introduction of purpose built taxi's e.g. London style cabs, will have the additional benefits of added driver security (screen between passenger compartment and driver controlled door locks to reduce the possibility of passengers absconding without paying the fare) and additional passenger capacity to transport larger groups of people from the town centre at night. The fare structure rewards drivers for carrying 5 or more passengers.</p> <p>The Task Group wishes to see a gradual introduction of purpose made London style cabs, together with a mechanism controlled by the Council to prevent additional licences granted from being transferred for profit. The vehicles should have maximum availability through driver-sharing.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager to develop a robust process to administer the issuing of additional hackney carriage plates in a transparent and equitable manner. Guidance and specialist advice to be sought from the Legal Services Manager and Licensing consultant.</p> <p>January 2003</p>

<p>6.3</p> <p>Awareness of the needs of disabled passengers</p>	<p>There is a need for improved awareness of the needs of disabled passengers</p>	<p>Work with the Associations and representatives of local disabled people to provide driver training.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager to develop a training package in conjunction with ESDA and the trade associations.</p> <p>May 2003</p>
<p>6.4</p> <p>Level of courtesy to passengers and Promotion of a positive image of the town to visitors</p>	<p>There is need to improve the courtesy offered to passengers and ensure that visitors to the town receive a positive impression.</p> <p>It is essential that drivers view themselves as ambassadors for the town.</p>	<p>Assist Associations with the implementation of driver training.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager to work with trade associations and representatives to develop and implement a standard of service for drivers</p> <p>May 2003</p>
<p>6.5</p> <p>Standard of drivers' attire</p>	<p>A voluntary dress code is in place and drivers' have been reminded of the standard expected through the regular newsletter produced by the Licensing Section.</p> <p>All parties agreed that standards could be improved. One Association has introduced a corporate dress code.</p>	<p>Work with the Associations to agree and implement an improved dress code.</p> <p>Associations should work together to adopt a consistent dress code.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manger to work with the trade associations to develop a dress code.</p> <p>May 2003</p>
<p>6.6</p> <p>Local knowledge</p>	<p>The location of a number of addresses has created difficulties</p>	<p>Ensure that new drivers entering the trade have a good knowledge of the Town</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager to review the current testing arrangements of driver knowledge.</p> <p>December 2002</p>
<p>6.7</p> <p>Smoking in vehicles</p>	<p>Passengers do not like to travel in vehicles in which the drivers/previous passengers have been smoking.</p>	<p>Consider the introduction of a condition to prevent smoking in vehicles.</p>	<p>Commercial Services Manager to identify licence options to enable this to be implemented.</p> <p>May 2003</p>
<p><u>7. Conduct of Council Officers</u></p> <p>7.1</p> <p>Application of the principles of the Enforcement Concordat</p>	<p>The principles of the Enforcement Concordat are adhered to. A recent example being the process adopted in relation to the suspension of a vehicle licence. When the case was heard at the Magistrates' Court it was confirmed that the process was handled appropriately and fairly.</p>	<p>Continue to ensure that the Environmental Health Enforcement Policy and the principles of the Enforcement Concordat are applied.</p> <p>Investigate the use of decoy passengers.</p> <p>Increase the level of enforcement and publicise enforcement action.</p>	<p>As way forward comment</p> <p>Commercial Services Manager to consult with Legal Services Manager and develop a protocol for use in enforcement action.</p> <p>December 2002</p>

<p>8. Integration with Transport Strategy</p>	<p>The purpose of the taxi and private hire licensing regime is to ensure the provision of a service to the public that is accessible and safe, and a credit to the Town.</p> <p>Review the liaison arrangements with colleagues working on behalf of the Highways Authority and the Eastbourne Crime Reduction Partnership.</p> <p>to improve the availability of taxi and private hire services thereby encouraging their use as a safe and convenient means of transport.</p>	<p>Ensure that the taxi and private hire policies are integrated with the Local Transport Plan, Eastbourne Crime Reduction Partnership Action Plan and Economic Development Strategy (in support of the night-time economy).</p>	<p>Head of Environmental Health and licensing staff to continue maintain links with relevant colleagues and organisations.</p>
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