

MEETING:	General Licensing Regulatory Board
DATE:	Wednesday, 28 October 2020
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Wraith MBE (Chair), Cherryholme, Clarke, Danforth, Eastwood, Green, Greenhough, C. Johnson, Kitching, Lodge, McCarthy, Saunders, Sumner, Tattersall and Wilson

1 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest from Members in respect of items on the agenda.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th September, 2020 were taken as a correct record.

3 Enforcement Update

The Service Director Legal Services submitted a report providing an overview of the work Licensing Officers had been undertaking to advise and support the Hackney carriage and Private Hire Trade during the Covid pandemic.

Members were informed that there had been very few changes in respect of Taxi Regulations since the last meeting other than following the Government's announcement on 22nd September, 2020 it was a legal requirement for passengers to wear face coverings in any private hire or hackney carriage vehicle, unless customers had an exemption due to age, disability or medical reasons. It was also noted that whilst drivers were advised and encouraged to also wear face coverings to keep themselves and customers safe, this was not mandatory. It was reported that taxi marshals had been monitoring the number of drivers wearing facemasks and were happy to report that all Hackney Carriage drivers were wearing face coverings whilst carrying passengers.

In the ensuing discussion, the following matters were raised:

- Drivers were not permitted to challenge any customer to prove they had an exemption from wearing a face covering. However, members were informed that drivers were permitted to refuse to carry any passenger who may be presenting symptoms. It is covered under taxi legislation that a driver can refuse carriage on the grounds of an infectious disease for their own and future passengers safety.

- Members were informed that all drivers were advised to inform Licensing Officers of any refusal to carry a passenger, in the event that a situation did arise then it would be on record and a full investigation could be carried out
- The issue of the cleaning of vehicles after all customers was raised and whilst it was noted this was not mandatory, drivers had been strongly encouraged to carry out cleaning of door handles, seatbelt clips and buckles between each fare
- Members wished to place on record that drivers had been and continued to be doing an excellent job in complying with covid regulations and keeping themselves and passengers safe.

Members received an update informing them of a survey that had been sent out to all licensed drivers asking for information in relation to their average daily mileage, distances of their average fares, most frequent journeys and their views in relation to electric vehicles and any obstacles they would foresee in purchasing one now and in the future. The survey was to enable Officers, in collaboration with the Energy Saving Trust, to understand how to support taxi and private hire drivers to switch to electric vehicles in the future in order to support the Boroughs transition to a zero carbon future as part of the Council's Zero 45 programme. Members noted that drivers had been asked to answer the questionnaire as if they were in normal times and not in the current unprecedented times. The information gathered would be used as intelligence as to which areas the trade would need targeting to install charging points across the Borough.

Members were informed that this was not something that would happen in the short term but that it would take several years in order to gather vital information to ensure that money is spent wisely in placing resources across the Borough for the Trade to use.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the Board place on record it's thanks and appreciation to the staff within the Licensing Service for all their hard work in ensuring the continued safety of the drivers and travelling public during the Covid pandemic.

Chair