

## **Licensing Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 17th October, 2017.**

**Present:-** Councillors Cheema (Chair), Parmar (Vice-Chair), Coad (from 6.35pm), Davis, Arvind Dhaliwal, Qaseem (from 6.32pm), Rasib, A Sandhu, Sohal, Strutton and Wright(from 6.35pm)

### **PART 1**

#### **10. Declarations of Interest**

None were received.

#### **11. Guidance on Predetermination/ Predisposition - To Note**

Members confirmed that they had read and understood the guidance on predetermination and predisposition.

#### **12. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 27th June 2017**

**Resolved-** That the minutes of the last meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017 be approved as a correct record.

#### **13. Proposed Emission Standards for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers**

*(Councillor Qaseem joined the meeting)*

The Licensing Manager, Mr Sims reminded the Committee that details of the Proposed Emission Standards for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles, as part of the Council's draft Low Emission Strategy (LES), were considered at the Licensing meeting in June 2017. It was proposed that, following the necessary consultations, that the emission standards be implemented from 2018.

There was currently 726 licensed hackney carriages (taxis) and private hire vehicles operating in Slough and a breakdown of the fuel types for each category of vehicles was explained. A consultation on the emission standards and implementation dates for both diesel and petrol vehicles was conducted between July and August 2017. All current hackney carriage and private hire drivers, vehicle licence holders and operators were consulted and details were also posted on the Council's website.

*(Councillors Coad and Wright joined the meeting)*

It was noted that the response to the consultation was fairly low. Although the hackney carriage and private hire trade were generally supportive of the proposals, concerns were raised regarding the cost of replacing vehicles to meet the criteria and the proposed implementation dates. In light of the responses, the original proposals had been revised and the rationale for the revised low emission standards had been based on the current age of licensed vehicles, the current vehicle age policy for private hire vehicles and

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saloon hackney carriages and the implementation dates of Euro Emission standards for both diesel and petrol vehicles.

Members were informed that the proposed setting of low emission standards impacted the most on proprietors of wheelchair accessible vehicles, of which there were currently 50 licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles. It was highlighted that a separate consultation would be held for wheelchair accessible vehicles with the representatives and proprietors to discuss replacing existing vehicles with ultra low emission vehicles (ULEV).

The Chair invited representatives from the trade who had requested to address the Committee:

- *Mr Sarfraz Khan, Representing Slough Taxi Union.* Mr Khan stated that although he was aware and understanding of the requirement to reduce pollution levels within the town, any implementation dates should take into account the potential impact on drivers and the necessary arrangements that would need to be carried out to comply with the proposed emission standards. It was suggested that vehicles be replaced only when the vehicle age limit had been reached.
- *Mr Aftab Khan Representing Slough Private Hire Driver Association.* Mr Khan informed Members that 527 private hire driver vehicles would be affected and the cost of purchasing replacement vehicles was substantial. It was reiterated that any vehicle currently licensed be allowed to continue to operate until the vehicle age policy expired. Concerns relating to used/pre owned vehicles were raised and the fact that this decision affected the majority of drivers within Slough.
- *Mr Abid Ur-Rehman, Representing a Private Hire Operator.* It was proposed that drivers who had recently purchased vehicles be allowed to continue with those vehicles until the age limit for the vehicles had been reached. Mr Ur-Rehman submitted that implementing the proposed emission standards for vehicles would place an excessive financial burden on the majority of private hire drivers.

A number of issues were raised in the ensuing discussion. It was noted that implementation of the proposed emission strategy could potentially have a detrimental financial impact on the livelihood of a majority of drivers within the Borough.

Clarification was sought relating to the current vehicle age policy. The Committee were informed that it was a requirement that vehicles were under five years of age at registration and could be licensed up to a maximum of nine years. It was brought to Members attention that the majority of vehicles purchased were usually used vehicles with no brand new vehicles being licensed.

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Whilst acknowledging the concerns raised by representatives of the trade, a Member requested details relating to what would be the impact on the strategy if an implementation date of 2025 was agreed. Information regarding measures taken by neighbouring Local Authorities was also requested.

Mr Whittles, from Low Emission Strategies Ltd, was in attendance at the meeting. Members were reminded that the Borough was well placed to comply with requirements, that all taxis and private hire vehicles be ULEV's by 2025. Incentives to facilitate a switch to ULEV's were summarised. It was clarified that although the Authority did not have to set and implement emission standards until 2020, Slough was one of the most polluted towns in the country and as Slough had participated in the Ultra Low Emission Taxi Study, Slough drivers would be eligible for a grant towards the purchase of an ULEV vehicle. It was noted that Bradford, Derby and Manchester had implemented Low Emission Strategies and it was expected that Reading would also be introducing emission standards in the near future.

A number of Members stated that further details were required regarding the number of vehicles that were likely to be affected by the introduction of a low emissions strategy, including the average age of vehicles when they were first licenced and how many were actually licensed up to 8 or 9 years. In addition, figures relating to the number of vehicles that would need to be replaced year on year up to 2025 were requested. Officers confirmed that although they did not have this information at present, it could be provided to Committee Members.

Committee Members highlighted concerns relating to how the strategy would contribute to negating pollution, when there were separate concerns such as the nearby presence and ongoing expansion of Heathrow. A number of Members stated that they would be supportive of extending the proposed implementation date for the LES deadline.

*(The meeting was adjourned at 7.54pm and reconvened at 7.59pm)*

Members agreed that further clarification into the detailed consequences of the policy implementation, including potential impact on drivers was required and consideration of the recommendations, as set out in the report, be deferred.

### **Resolved -**

- a) That the number of all saloon vehicles to be replaced year on year up to 2025 and a breakdown of the fuel consumption type be provided to the Committee.
- b) That the current number and percentage of the age of all current licensed saloon vehicles be provided to the Committee.
- c) That an Extraordinary Meeting be arranged to consider the matters above.

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*(Councillors Coad and Wright requested that their abstention on voting on the above be placed on record)*

### **14. Members Attendance Record 2017/18**

Noted.

### **15. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.09 pm)