

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING & APPEALS COMMITTEE

3 April 2006

Report of the Chief Solicitor

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

3 ANNUAL MEETING WITH TAXI TRADE

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Council's annual meeting with the taxi trade took place on 8 March 2006 at the Angel Centre. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Mrs Kemp, accompanied by Duncan Robinson, Chief Solicitor, Melvyn Wood, Licensing Manager, and Chris Tandy, Licensing Inspector. This report summarises the issues raised.

3.2 Issues raised by Tonbridge and Malling Licenced Drivers Association

3.2.1 The following issues were raised by TMLDA:

- 1) Application to vary fares tariff (this is referred to in my first report on this agenda). The meeting was divided on the suitability of introducing a 'time and distance' tariff and strong views were expressed for and against.
- 2) The issue was raised of firms which use 'O' licensed vehicles for taxi work. It was noted that this is permissible only for private hire work and that any reports of them working as hackney carriages would be investigated.
- 3) Last year the issue was raised that the public conveniences in Priory Street were locked at night, leaving drivers with nowhere to go. Concerns were raised that this issue had not been progressed and an assurance was given that this would be raised with Environmental Health.
- 4) The lack of a shelter for passengers at the Waterloo Road rank was raised. The issue delaying this is one of lack of funding and the trade suggested that the Council might seek commercial sponsorship.
- 5) Hitherto, vehicles have been parking in the car park of Lidl in Waterloo Road, but this facility was being withdrawn. It was agreed that this issue would be raised with Lidl's management.

- 6) Signage at taxi ranks was also raised. This had been raised last year and the Council had approved funding, so there were concerns that the project had not been implemented. It was explained that this was being done as part of a wider project. The Council was urged to implement this part of the project as a matter of urgency.
- 7) The possibility of a new daytime rank in The Botany was raised and it was agreed that this would be investigated.
- 8) As regards the proposed new rank in Barden Road, disappointment was expressed that the trade had not been consulted about this. Concerns were raised about the unsuitability of this location, due to the trouble arising in the area from licensed premises. It was explained that the order had not yet been made to officially create the rank and that there was a consultation exercise as part of that process.
- 9) Safety concerns were raised in relation to the rank on the station forecourt and conflict with bus movements. It was noted that the rank actually belonged to the station operators and the Council agreed to discuss its closure with them.
- 10) It was reported that there had been a number of incidents involving violent assaults and robbery on taxi drivers on the rank in Waterloo Road. There was CCTV in the area, but this was focussed on the station entrance. The police had put a "hawkeye" camera in the area, but that had since been removed. The Council was asked to explore either replacing hawkeye with a permanent camera or using the other camera also to view the rank. It was agreed that this would be raised with the CCTV unit.
- 11) It was also raised that some Council's subsidise the installation of in-vehicle CCTV. It transpired that some operators had installed the systems at their own expense.

3.3 Other issues raised

- 3.3.1 Kings Hill Taxis raised the question whether the Council would be prepared to allow hackney carriages to be silver in colour, whilst retaining the current requirement for white as an alternative. It was reported that this matter was last considered in September 2003, when it was agreed that it would be looked at again in three year's time. A report would be considered by the committee in Autumn 2006.
- 3.3.2 An individual raised the question that some vehicles leaving the Council's testing stations had been passed with defects on them. It was agreed that this would be investigated and any necessary remedial action taken.

3.4 Issues raised by the Council

3.4.1 It was confirmed that the Council would now be implementing a system of random vehicle inspections and warning notices would be issued where defects were found. Drivers to whom a notice was issued would be made subject to an administration fee and it was hoped that these fees would cover the costs of the resources employed on enforcement. It was noted that repeat "offenders" could be referred to a Panel.

3.5 Legal Implications

3.5.1 None

3.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

3.6.1 Not applicable

3.7 Risk Assessment

3.7.1 Not applicable

Background papers:

Letter from Tonbridge and Malling Licenced Drivers
Association dated 24 February 2006

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