

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## LICENSING & APPEALS COMMITTEE

25 September 2024

### Report of the Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Delegated

## 1 DISCUSSION – SAFETY OF WOMEN WHEN TAKING A TAXI OR PRIVATE HIRE JOURNEY

### 1.1 Executive Overview

1.1.1 At the Licensing and Appeals Committee on the 26 March 2024, Cllr Anna Cope, Member for Cage Green and Angel Ward raised concerns that had been reported by members of the public over the experiences of women while taking a taxi from Waterloo Taxi Stand in Tonbridge.

1.1.2 The Licensing and Appeals Committee agreed to hold a discussion at the meeting of the Committee on the 25 September 2024.

1.1.3 Within the examples given are:

- *Taxi not taking the first fare* – A passenger taking a taxi does not have to take the first taxi on the rank, however where a driver refuses to take a fare due to a short journey, the current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy is very clear, that refusal will have 9 penalty points being imposed on their TMBC driving licence and a two-week suspension.
- *Card machine isn't working* – The policy at section 6.1.1 makes it very clear that That all Hackney Carriage Vehicles must have working card payment facilities for credit/debit card payments.
- *Taxi Marshalls* – The current costs to provide Taxi Marshalls for 2025 would be charged at a rate of £19.76 a hour. If two Marshalls worked for 15 hours a week would cost £593, 20 hours a week would cost £790, and 37 hours a week would cost £1,462. Currently there is no budget in place to cover the presence of Taxi Marshalls.

1.1.4 The examples of concerns provided by Cllr Cope are shown at **Annex 1**.

### 1.2 Background

1.2.1 Public safety is a paramount consideration when processing application forms for prospective candidates by ensuring only fit and proper persons are licensed to be

entrusted to drive members of the public safely, professionally, and courteously to and from their required destinations.

- 1.2.2 All licenced drivers are required to undertake Child Sexual Exploitation and Safeguarding Training and Disability equality training. Female safety training is currently covered under Safeguarding training.
- 1.2.3 One of TMBC objectives in setting out the Taxi policy is ensuring the safety of the public and of licensed drivers.
- 1.2.4 All our drivers are required to have an enhanced disclosure and barring service checks.

### **1.3 Violence against Women and Girls Survey**

- 1.3.1 Earlier this year TMBC ran a survey about Violence against Women and Girls, to which 80 responses were received.
- 1.3.2 References to taxis included:

“I would never walk around at night alone, even in the roads surrounding my house. Alley ways freak me out even though they are generally well lit but there is not adequate streetlights on for me to feel safe alone. I also find getting into taxi's alone very scary.”

“Improve education. Improve lighting and services for women i.e. taxis”

“Pickpockets, taxi drivers, walking home at night”

“In terms of travelling safely, I prefer cycling to getting a bus or taxi, so safer cycle routes to Hadlow would help, but this is probably too indirectly linked to VAWG, but like the parking aspect above, recognises the wider policy & decision making across TMBC/KCC that needs to consider how women will be impacted”.

“Cameras in taxis, CCTV in public places, table bag hooks in restaurants and bars”

“Woman only train carriages and minibus services. Raise awareness and encourage use of women only taxis. Visible police patrolling at late/last train times with male and female officers. Free or low cost self defence training local locations. Ebikes at the station so women don't have to walk home”

- 1.3.3 A copy of the results from the consultation is shown at **Annex 2**

### **1.4 Proposed Door Signs**

When Licensing Services receive a complaint or concern about a taxi driver, vehicle or journey, a lot of complainants do not remember which taxi or private hire vehicle plate number is the subject of the complaint.

To help with identifying which vehicle is involved the Licensing Team have acquired some sample door signs for Members' consideration.

Copies of the door signs are shown at **Annex 3**.

## **1.5 Legal Implications**

1.5.1 None identified for this discussion

## **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.6.1 None identified for this discussion

## **1.7 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.7.1 Within the current taxi fleet of driver's licences by TMBC there are very few female taxi or private hire drivers. In addition, we have a very wide cosmopolitan make-up of drivers from many different cultural backgrounds and Countries.

1.7.2 The Safeguarding training does aim to reduce inequalities

## **1.8 Recommendations**

1.8.1 Members are requested to APPROVE the introduction of the proposed door signs at Annex 3.

Background papers:

contact:  
Anthony Garnett 6151

Adrian Stanfield  
Director of Central Services and Deputy Chief Executive