

Minutes of the Regulatory Committee

18 July 2024

-: Present :-

Councillors Amil, Brook, Douglas-Dunbar, Foster, Hutchings, Barbara Lewis, Pentney, Long and David Thomas

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Johns and Virdee.

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Committee had been amended for this meeting by including Councillors David Thomas and Long instead of Councillors Bryant and Johns respectively.

2. Results of Unmet Demand Study of Taxis in Torbay 2023 and the public consultation in 2024

The Regulatory Services Manager presented the submitted report which set out the outcome of an Unmet Demand Survey commissioned by Torbay Council in response to the guidance issued by the Department for Transport. Members were advised that at the time the survey was undertaken the best practice guidance stated an Unmet Demand Survey should be undertaken every three years, best practice guidance had since been updated requiring an Unmet Demand Survey be undertaken at least every 5 years.

To comply with the three yearly requirement, Torbay Council engaged the services of a company called Licensed Survey Vehicle & Assessment (LVSA) to undertake the seventh of these unmet demand studies in 2023. Their study included rank observations, on street interviews, discussions with user groups and stakeholders and a questionnaire sent to all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers and vehicle licence holders.

From the results of this survey, it has been identified that passenger demand has fallen by 0.4% from the last survey carried out in 2020. However, 48% of those passengers experienced a delay of over a minute compared to just 18% in 2020. In 2018 when there was no unmet demand, passenger delay was 5%.

Members were requested to consider the recommendations contained within the consultant's report in respect of quantity control and the results of the 12-week public consultation.

Members are also asked to consider amending the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, (hereinafter referred to as 'The Policy'), dependant on the outcome of their decision at 1.2. This includes not enforcing a section of the Policy, along with Appendix K from the Policy (criteria to be considered in the allocation of Hackney Carriage vehicle proprietors licence waiting list).

At the meeting representations were received from Jacqui Nickels from Torbay United Licensed Drivers Association and Mr Ray Hall from Torbay Licensed Taxi Association.

Three members of the public present at the meeting, also raised various concerns including safety of drivers and tariff increases. Members noted these concerns and sought clarification of what could be done. The legal advisor advised that whilst members were concerned about these issues, this was not within the scope of the Regulatory Committee to discuss today, however the following concerns would be noted:

- Rate review and implementation of Nighttime tariff increase.
- Review of Marshalls
- Review of ranks: numbers and spaces
- Enforcement of Rank Spaces
- Safety of Taxi Drivers at nighttime.

Resolved:

That the meeting be adjourned, and the Divisional Director of Community and Customer Services be asked to arrange a further consultation upon the option of an additional 17 Hackney Carriage vehicle licences with a further test of level of service to be undertaken within 6 months of all these additional licences being issued. The results of this public consultation to come back before the Regulatory Committee for their further consideration and determination.

Reasons:

Members heard the oral submission from Torbay Council's Regulatory Services Manager which summarised the results of the Unmet Demand Survey report undertaken by a company called LVSA (Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment) and the impact and required steps of those findings, and the submissions made by the trade representatives through their oral representations.

Whilst Members recognised that to do nothing was not an option, they were concerned that to de-limit the Hackney Carriage vehicles within Torbay, would have a negative impact upon the trade. Therefore, in noting that the Unmet Demand Study concluded that Torbay has an extremely high level of significant unmet demand and steps must be taken to return passenger waiting times to a reasonable level, Members wished to first explore managed growth, as set out as being an option within

the LVSA report, though preferred the suggestion of a 10% increase, as put forward at the hearing by the trade representative.

Noting that a 10% increase had not been the subject of a public consultation, Members determined it should be, on the advice of officers.

In concluding, Members were advised, that should Hackney Carriage vehicle licence applications be received, these would have to be considered in accordance with the current Policy and the survey report findings.

Chairman/woman
