

Crawley Borough Council

**Minutes of Licensing Committee**

Tuesday, 7 February 2023 at 7.00 pm

**Councillors Present:**

I T Irvine (Chair)

Z Ali (Vice-Chair)

M L Ayling, J Bounds, B J Burgess, J Hart, K L Jaggard, M G Jones, K Khan, K McCarthy,  
M Morris, C J Mullins, B Noyce and D M Peck

**Also in Attendance:**

Councillors R D Burrett, S Malik, M Mwangale and Ian Millarship - LVSA

**Officers Present:**

Heather Girling

Democratic Services Officer

Chris Pedlow

Democracy & Data Manager

Kareen Plympton

Team Leader - Health, Safety and Licensing

Astrid Williams

Senior Lawyer (Solicitor)

**Apologies for Absence:**

Councillor A Nawaz

**1. Disclosures of Interest**

No disclosures of interest were made.

Councillors Ali, Ayling, Bounds, Burgess, Irvine, Jaggard, Jones, Khan, Morris, Mullins, Noyce and Peck confirmed that they had received some form of lobbying in respect of agenda item 4 – Hackney Carriage Unmet Demand Survey 2022.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 7 November 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3. Public Question Time**

No questions from the public were asked.

#### 4. Hackney Carriage Unmet Demand Survey 2022

The Committee considered a presentation from LVSA on the Unmet Demand Survey 2022 (attached as appendix A to these minutes), along with report [HCS/054](#) of the Head of Community Services. The Health, Safety and Licensing Team Leader presented the report, which set out details of the latest Crawley hackney carriage unmet demand survey. The survey was due to be conducted in 2020/21 but was postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, so had instead been carried out throughout the latter half of 2022 and early part of 2023. The findings of the survey indicated that there was no significant level of unmet demand from members of the public for the services of hackney carriage vehicles in the area (although demand had increased slightly since the prior survey, conducted in 2017). The Committee was therefore recommended to consider whether to retain the existing policy of limiting the number of hackney carriage vehicle licenses (currently set at 123).

The Committee was further advised that the Council maintained a policy of retaining a mixed fleet of hackney carriage vehicles, including wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) to cater for the varying needs of service users. Currently, WAV vehicles make up approximately 19% of the hackney carriage fleet. The Council was committed to meeting the needs of the travelling public in Crawley including those who have disabilities of any nature and/wider support needs. In addition to the mandatory disability awareness training all drivers were required to undertake, there was also mandatory wheelchair training, which all hackney carriage drivers would be expected to take, along with safeguarding training for all of the Trade by a prescribed date.

The Committee Chair invited the Chair of Crawley Hackney Carriage Association (Mr Bhatti) to speak on the item. Matters raised included the impact generally on the trade due to the challenges post Covid-19 pandemic and the changes in the night-time economy. It was noted that the Trade were of the view that business had declined since September last year, especially at the Crawley station rank and consequently retaining the existing policy of limiting the number of hackney carriage vehicle licenses was welcomed.

The Committee then discussed the presentation and report. The following matters and views were raised:

- The issues at the High Street and Station ranks were noted in terms of enforcement and provision and it was hoped these could be given future consideration.
- Concern raised over the potential impact on the trade and residents arising from the proposed changes to Three Bridges railway station. The outcome would be following consideration of the application by the Local Planning Authority.
- Signage and promotional material were currently being produced in order to increase awareness and profile of responsible drinking, safer socialising and the importance of planning safe and suitable transport home. Information relating to the current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire functions and enforcement would be scoped to raise the profile of both Trades as a means to educate the travelling public as to the differences and safe travelling practices. This would be shared with Councillors prior to publishing to a wider audience.
- Local authorities had different approaches with regards to implementing policies of limiting hackney carriage proprietor licences. There was no current statutory prohibition on continued numerical restriction (limit) provided the Council was satisfied there was no significant unmet demand. Nonetheless, the Council should demonstrate, if it does not follow the Government Guidance by continuing to limit numbers, that had robust reasons for so doing and had acted reasonably

in making its determination. The survey conducted every 3 years assisted in confirming its position.

- Support expressed for the training already undertaken and recognition that additional safeguarding measures were being rolled out to include Taxi Marshalls and Night Safe Marshalls. The primary role would be to offer public re-assurance, engagement and facilitate a safe passage home.
- Work on investigating 'dual badge' licences was ongoing as significant work was entailed to ensure robust audit compliance.
- Confirmation that the plate remained the ownership of the authority but in practice a licensed hackney carriage vehicle did command a commercial value if sold to another individual. A hackney carriage proprietor licence being transferred from one individual to another involved a legal process together with concurring a small fee payable to the Council.

The Committee expressed its thanks to those responsible for undertaking the unmet demand survey and was, overall, generally supportive of the recommendation to continue to limit the number of hackney carriage vehicle licenses (set at 123).

### **RESOLVED**

That the Committee:

- a) Confirms that it gave due consideration to the unmet demand survey report, which was undertaken on behalf of Crawley Borough Council, and that it was satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages.
- b) Agrees that the Council would continue to have a policy of limiting the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences issued by Crawley Borough Council, subject to any applicant demonstrating exceptional circumstances, and confirmed the limit level (number of licences) shall remain at 123 licenses.

### **Closure of Meeting**

With the business of the Licensing Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.07 pm

**I T Irvine (Chair)**