

PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

7 DECEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor Michael(Chairperson)
Councillors Driscoll, Ferguson-Thorne, Gunter, Lancaster and Palmer

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Bridgeman, Gibson, Jenkins and Kaaba

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3 : MINUTES

The minutes of previous meetings were approved as a correct record.

4 : REVIEW OF THE MORATORIUM ON HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE LICENCES

The Committee received a report recommending that the Committee consider approval to undertake a consultation exercise on the removing the moratorium on the issuing of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences.

Member were advised that a moratorium on the issuing of new hackney carriage vehicle licences has been in place in Cardiff since 2010. The position was reviewed in 2019 when the Committee determined that the moratorium should remain in place. However, of the 946 hackney carriage licences in the city, 220 are currently 'on hold' and therefore 726 hackney carriages are actively licenced in the city.

If the moratorium is to remain in place then Department of Transport best practice recommends that an independent survey be undertaken at least every three years to assess the levels of demand. In 2019 an independent survey of Cardiff's taxi demand found that there was no significant unmet demand and as a result the Public Protection Committee resolved to maintain the moratorium.

The Licensing Department has received a number of complaints from passengers unable to get hackney carriages and have found that the number of vehicle licences not being actively used has increased in recent years. Furthermore, there are very few authorities in the UK that have a moratorium on the issuing of hackney carriage licences. Cardiff is the only authority in Wales that has such a moratorium in place.

It was considered that the current moratorium restricts new entrants into the trade unless they are able to purchase a hackney carriage vehicle already licenced in Cardiff. As a result, there is a secondary market in Cardiff for hackney carriage licences and new entrants are required to pay a significant sum of money to purchase an older diesel vehicle before they can enter the trade. This may limit the amount which can be invested in new cleaner' vehicles.

The moratorium in Cardiff means that only those who already hold a hackney carriage licence, or rent a vehicle from a hackney carriage proprietor, are permitted to join the Welsh Government funding Electric Taxi Scheme. This position is unique to Cardiff and has led to very low take up of the Electric Taxi Scheme compared to other areas. It was anticipated that if the moratorium were removed it would enable any licensed hackney carriage/private hire vehicle driver to take advantage of the Welsh Government scheme.

The Chairperson invited comments and questions from Members of the Committee. The Committee debated the merits of the proposal.

Members sought to clarify how the consultation exercise would be undertaken. Members were advised that details of the consultation exercise were set out in the report. Members of the trade, operators, partner organisations such as South Wales Police, ward members and members of the public would all have an opportunity to make representations. The consultation exercise would run for six weeks and the responses would inform any future decision from the Committee. Members were advised not to consult with the trade directly if possible. Approaches from the trade should be referred to the appropriate channels.

Officers confirmed that an Equalities Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken prior to any decision on proposals to remove the moratorium.

Members asked whether the authority has any powers to prevent vehicles licenced by other authorities operating in the city. Officers indicated that the authority currently has no powers to prevent this.

Members also requested a breakdown of the reasons why 220 hackney carriage licences were currently 'on hold'. Officers stated that the reasons were difficult to identify. Members also requested further information on the complaints received and any supporting information to be set out in future reports.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) the Committee approves a consultation exercise be undertaken seeking views on the removal of the moratorium;
- (2) a report be presented to the committee on the outcome of the consultation exercise.

5 : PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE MANDATORY CARD PAYMENT FACILITIES IN HACKNEY CARRIAGES

The Committee received a report seeking approval to conduct a consultation exercise in relation to a proposal to introduce mandatory card payment facilities in hackney carriages licensed by Cardiff Council.

It is proposed to carry out a consultation on adding the following conditions to the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Conditions:

- The proprietor shall ensure that passengers are able to make payment via a debit card, credit card and contactless card payment.
- The card payment system will be stored in a transparent plastic holder which will be affixed so that the card machine is always in prominent view of the customer.
- The card payment system must be stored in the holder at all times when the driver is available for hire.
- The proprietor shall ensure that all drivers of the vehicle are trained on how to use the card payment system and are aware that passengers must be able to make payment in this manner.
- Where a fault in the card payment system is identified, the proprietor must notify the Licensing Department and arrange repair/replacement within 48 hours

The Committee discussed the report. Members were broadly supportive of the proposal to introduce mandatory card payments hackney carriages.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) The Committee approves a consultation exercise seeking views on the introduction of mandatory card readers in hackney carriages;
- (2) a subsequent report will be presented to the committee to present the outcome of the consultation exercise.

The meeting terminated at 10.35 am