

PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

23 JULY 2019

Present: Councillor Mackie(Chairperson)
Councillors Derbyshire, Jacobsen, Lancaster, Robson and Wood

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Dilwar Ali and Susan Goddard.

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3 : APPLICATION FOR THE USE OF ELECTRIC RICKSHAWS AS PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Licensing authority received an application from the private hire operator Ola to have electric rickshaws approved as private hire vehicles for general use. Members were advised that the vehicles were similar to the electric 'Tuk Tuk' vehicles approved previously by the Committee. Electric rickshaws, however, are smaller and can only carry two passengers.

Ola intends to offer the rickshaws as an option for general private hire use through their booking app, rather than for sightseeing tours on the pre-planned routes previously agreed by the Committee. These vehicles would operate in a zone restricted to the City Centre and Cardiff Bay.

If the Committee was minded to grant the application then the licensing conditions would need to be amended. The changes were set out in Appendix C of the report. The report also provided an overview of the vehicles in terms of passenger safety, passenger comfort and vehicle accessibility.

The Chairperson welcomed Ben Legg, Managing Director, Ola UK and Tros Erlich, Project Manager to the meeting. Ben Legg presented the application.

Members were advised that Ola is introducing electric vehicles in India as all 3 wheel vehicles must be electric within the next 3 years. Ola consider that electric rickshaws could also work in the UK as most cities are seeking improve air quality and lower emissions. The vehicles are designed by a former Volvo engineer and meet all EU directives in terms of safety. These vehicles have been operating in Stockholm for the past 18 months and Ola has chosen Cardiff to launch its UK pilot.

Responding to a question from the Committee, Tros Erlich provided further details of the safety features in the vehicle. The vehicles are fitted with a roll cage, 3 point seat-belts, hydraulic disk brakes and wheels that a suitable for all types of weather. There a many similar vehicles on the market but Ola ruled out the other options for safety reasons. These vehicles stood out from their competitors in terms of safety.

The applicants stated that the vehicles have an average range of 30 miles on one charge. Ola are planning to operate a storage/charging facility adjacent to the operating zone. Vehicles will never be more than 3 miles away from their charging facility. Longer term Ola would assess the viability of swapping batteries so that vehicles are not kept out of service whilst charging.

A Member asked whether any lessons have been learned during the time Ola were operating in Stockholm. Tros Erlich stated that it was apparent that electric rickshaws operate differently to conventional taxis. Rides are generally shorter. Popular uses include partnerships with businesses, short journeys in bad weather, young people and sightseeing.

A Member noted that the restricted zone was an area of high pedestrian footfall. The Member asked whether any testing has been done in terms of collisions with pedestrians and how these vehicles compare to cars. Members were advised that all vehicles will be driven by professional licensed drivers. They are lighter and slower than conventional vehicles. There have been no major incidents in Stockholm involving collisions with pedestrians.

The Committee further discussed the protection the vehicles offer from the weather, how the restricted area would operate, MOT requirements and age restrictions. The applicants confirmed that consideration would be given to converting some vehicles to allow disabled access, if there was an opportunity to expand the fleet in the future.

Members were asked to note that if they were minded to grant the application condition 5 in the existing conditions relating to maximum number of passengers would also apply to the proposed amended conditions listed in appendix C. The condition had been left out of Part 2 of the list of amended conditions due to an administrative error.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) The ZBee Rickshaw be approved as suitable to be licensed as a private hire vehicle;
- (2) The amendments to the Rickshaw specific private hire vehicle conditions detailed in Appendix C be approved.

4 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

The meeting terminated at 10.45 am