

# LICENSING COMMITTEE (NON LICENSING ACT 2003 COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS)

## Agenda Item 30

Brighton & Hove City Council

### EXTRACT FROM DRAFT ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23 JANUARY 2012

**Present:** Councillors Morgan (Chair); Sykes (Deputy Chair), Cobb, Gilbey, Hawtree, Janio Jones and Deane

#### PART ONE

#### **34. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

##### **34a Declarations of Substitutes**

Councillor Deane was substituting for Councillor Littman.

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#### **38. TAXI LICENSING AND THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE OFFICE**

38.1 The Head of Regulatory Services Tim Nichols introduced the report on Taxi Licensing and the Hackney Carriage Office.

38.2 Regulation of Taxis was largely out of date and the government would be consulting on draft legislation this year, with a draft Bill expected in late 2013. Some key provisions of the Equality Act 2010 such as taxi access and control of taxi numbers did not yet have commencement dates.

38.3 There had been significant developments since the request for scrutiny was considered by ECSOSC in September. Licensing Committee in November had: reviewed the terms of reference of the Taxi Forum (the Fed Centre for Independent Living was a formal member of the Forum); agreed additions to the Blue Book, that gave guidance to drivers on providing services to people with disabilities, copies of which were available to Councillors on request.; and commissioned a survey of taxi provision compared with other authorities. There was now a 'shadow' list of designated wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs) and officers were trying to achieve the right proportion of WAVs, he said.

38.4 Chair of Licensing Committee Councillor Lizzie Deane highlighted some of the challenges around gaps in the law and explained that drivers are self employed. She told the Committee that the Taxi Forum held regular meetings that were well attended and its Members included drivers, union reps and the Fed Centre for Independent Living. She said there was a lot of goodwill to work well in partnership.

38.5 Councillor Deane, the Head of Regulatory Services and the Hackney Carriage Officer answered questions on the Local Government Ombudsman 2011 decision not to investigate a

complaint; how WAVs are designated and allocated (in view of a wide range of saloons and other vehicles, plus a wide range of disabilities); longer waiting times for users of WAVs; the role of the taxi driver in handling wheelchairs; driver training, especially covering the change from saloon to WAV; and estimating the level and proportion of use of accessible taxis.

38.6 Regarding risk assessments, drivers are self-employed and have a duty to operate safely. Training is provided by two local providers, the meeting heard.

38.7 Geraldine Des Moulins of the Federation of Disabled People said there were concerns about the types of accessible vehicles, and the voice of the FDP had been 'drowned' for years. There were difficulties for disabled people in accessing taxis in some out of town areas and at some times of day eg during school runs. There should be more consultation with stakeholders; more benchmarking; better information on numbers of drivers trained and on the content of learning modules to ensure safe transfer and travelling, she said.

38.8 Geraldine Des Moulins said other local authorities provided better taxi services for disabled people despite the legal situation so research on best practice elsewhere would be invaluable to be applied in Brighton & Hove, she said. Asked about positive experience from elsewhere, Geraldine Des Moulins gave Bath and London as examples.

38.9 Councillor Cobb said there had been a lot of consultation and the Taxi Forum worked well. Driver training and equalities work was continuing and officers worked pro-actively.

38.10 After further discussion and a vote Members did not agree to a scrutiny review.

38.11 **RESOLVED:** That the matter be submitted to the Licensing Committee to continue to develop taxi licensing policy to improve services for disabled passengers.