

Update on Old Station Road Taxi Rank and the Taxi Licensing Policy

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Purpose of the Report

To update the Committee on matters arising from the last meeting in relation to the Old Station Road taxi rank and the wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) policy. Also to inform the Committee of a review of the Taxi Licensing Policy and changes to the logo on the licence plates.

Public Interest

The taxi rank on Old Station Road, Yeovil, can currently only be used by wheelchair accessible taxis. Following a request at the last committee to review this rank as wheelchair only, officers have considered what options may be available and these are presented in the report. In addition information regarding a review of the Taxi Licensing Policy is also provided. A question was also raised at the last committee regarding why the licence plates are showing the old Council logo. This is also explained in the report.

Recommendation

That the Licensing Committee:

- a. Approve changing signage on the rank on Old Station Road, Yeovil to allow it to be used by standard hackney carriages.
- b. Note the details regarding the review of the Taxi Licensing Policy and the logo detail of the licence plates.

Background

The rank on Old Station Road, Yeovil (next to Premier Inn and Beefeater) is a WAV only taxi rank, which has seven spaces and was created in 2015. The spaces are marked out on the tarmac and have suitable allowance either side to allow wheelchair access (see photo attached - Appendix 1).

A Councillor has received comments that this rank is not being used by taxis. It is possible that the rank is not being used because it is for WAV taxis only, and that if non-WAV taxis were able to use it, it would be used more often.

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Taxi Rank, Old Station Road

The Council has the power to create and vary a hackney carriage stand. This is set out in The Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976. Variation of the rank to include new markings on the tarmac removing the side allowance for wheelchairs and provision of additional bays would require a formal procedure to be followed.

Where a rank is on private land, the consent of the landowner must be obtained, and on the public highway, the consent of the highway authority must be obtained.

In addition the Chief Officer of Police must be notified and a public notice must be published in a local newspaper.

There are 28 days following the publication of the notice where objections and representations can be made. Any representations and comments would need to be considered before making any changes to the rank.

As an alternative to a formal variation the signage which says “wheelchair accessible taxis only” could simply be changed or removed. This would eliminate the requirement to consult and advertise changes to the rank and would allow non WAV taxis to use the rank as well.

The Officer recommendation is to approve removal of the existing signage or creation of new signage which would allow non-wheelchair accessible taxis to use this rank. This would cost less compared to advertising a variation and re-marking the rank. This option would also keep the areas to the side and back of the rank to allow passengers to enter and exit taxis safely. Whilst there is not requirement in this option to carry out formal consultation, officers suggest it would be advisable to do this and consider any comments on changes being made to the rank.

The Committee also have the option of doing nothing as leaving the rank as it stands as available for wheelchair accessible vehicles only.

Other Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Issues

Consultation on WAV Policy and the Taxi Licensing Policy

The consultation on the WAV policy has not commenced yet. There is a requirement to write to drivers to ask for permission to contact them in relation to consultation as this is not covered by the privacy notice. This subject will be part of a letter, which covers other taxi licensing issues.

The WAV policy is part of the Taxi Licensing Policy. This Policy has been in place since 2015 so there is a need to review the entire policy. A meeting will take place later this month to start this process. Guidance on considering the suitability of licensed drivers and applicants for private hire and hackney carriage licences (criminal convictions) has been published recently and it is likely that this will be considered for adoption into the policy as part of the review.

Vehicle Licence Plates

The current stock showing the Council old logo is being used up before changing over to the new Council logo. There will a period of time where there will be a mixture of plates showing the old and new logo.

Financial Implications

There will be costs for officer time to review Policy. In addition, depending on the option taken, there will be costs of either; advertising a variation to the rank, re-marking and new signage, or new signage only.

The above costs can all be met from existing budgets.

Council Plan Implications

To promote a strong and growing economy with thriving urban, rural and land-based businesses
To enable health communities which are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

Nothing which affects the report on “greenhouse gas emissions from local authorities own estate and operations”.

Equality and Diversity Implications

If the decision is taken to vary the rank and change the markings making additional bays then this would remove the number of wheelchair accessible taxi only spaces in the town centre. However, our information is that these ranks are rarely used and other taxis could make better use of the rank. The other ranks in the town centre are currently used by WAV and non WAV taxis.

A further report regarding any proposed changes to the Taxi Licensing Policy as informed by the evidence will be supported by an Equality Impact Assessment.

Privacy Impact Assessment

The recommendation is that we investigate the effect of the policy and it is likely that consultation will take place with stakeholders.

It will involve processing data we currently hold to inform licensed drivers and operators of the consultation.

The information will be used to inform policy.

The information gathered would only be kept until any changes to the policy have been made.

The data will not be shared or processed externally. Analysis of the data will be published, but personal information will not be shared.

Background Papers

- South Somerset District Council - Taxi Licensing Policy
 - South Somerset District Council decisions taken by South Somerset District Council 6th November 2014
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