

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE

14 FEBRUARY 2013

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES

TAXI LICENSING A TAXI FORUM FOR BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise the Licensing Committee on the creation of a Taxi Forum comprising members of the local taxi trade and Public Protection staff.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 Taxi licensing is a regulatory function which supports a number of the Council's corporate priorities, including
- Creating vibrant and thriving towns, and
 - Continuing to promote Bridgend as a place to visit

3. Background

- 3.1 While there is daily interaction between the Authority and the taxi trade on an individual basis, there has not, to date, been a more formal mechanism of communicating with and canvassing the views of the local trade as a whole. The creation of a Taxi Forum has been identified as an effective means of bridging this gap, and similar Fora in other local authority areas have proved extremely successful.
- 3.2 The vision for the Taxi Forum is for it to be a means of open communication, a two way dialogue between the trade and the authority. This is of particular importance in providing updates on legislative change and other developments, and in consultation with the trade on draft documents, policy matters and so on.
- 3.3 While the Taxi Forum would act an expert panel or focus group to identify, consider and make recommendations on areas for improvement, it would have no powers of decision on matters falling to the Licensing Committee. Its purpose would be to consider and make recommendations on matters affecting the trade in the wider sense, and certainly not for discussing and resolving individual concerns. The channels for dealing with the latter would remain unchanged.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 Last autumn, members of the local taxi trade were invited to sit on a Taxi Forum for Bridgend county borough, and an initial scoping meeting took place with representatives of the various sectors of the trade, at the end of November 2012.

4.2 There was a strong desire from the initial meeting in November for the creation of a local Taxi Forum, and it is clear that there are a number of issues which attendees would like to see considered through the work of the Forum, and areas for improvement identified. Following that initial meeting, attendees were asked to rank their concerns into priority areas and the following broad areas have emerged:-

- Wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Equalities issues
- Age of vehicles and vehicle testing
- Fees
- Disciplinary process and sanctions against drivers
- School Transport

These will be taken forward through a work programme for the Forum, in conjunction with the relevant local authority department or other agency, and recommendations for improvement made.

4.3 The Forum will now meet once every two months and guest speakers will be invited to provide updates on matters affecting the Taxi trade. To date presentations have been provided on transport issues in the context of the Authority's Strategic Equality Plan and on civil parking enforcement post 1st April 2013

4.4 The Forum has recently agreed a set of terms of reference. These make it clear that certain recommendations of the Forum, for example those relating to matters of policy, will have to be put before the Licensing Committee for consideration. Decisions on other recommendations, for example those that are purely administrative, may depending on the circumstances be considered and implemented outside the Committee and legislative framework.

4.5 Initially, the Forum will be chaired and hosted by officers of the Authority, however this position will be reviewed after the Forum has been running for 12 months

4.6 Going forward, a dedicated area of the BCBC website will be created for minutes of the Forum meetings as well as relevant updates, consultation documents and so on.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no negative equality implications, indeed the work of the Forum in relation to the priority areas of wheelchair accessibility and other Equalities issues

will make a positive contribution in the context of the Authority's Strategic Equality Plan.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no financial implications

8. Recommendation.

8.1 The Committee is asked to note the above report.

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Background documents

Bridgend County Borough Taxi Forum Terms of Reference