

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

20 NOVEMBER 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report prepared by Lorraine Neale

1. REVIEW OF TAXI RANK PROVISION

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To advise Members of the progress arising from the further consultations undertaken in respect of the current taxi rank provision.

1.2 Recommendation of Head of Housing and Community Services

1.2.1 That Members note the responses received to date and agree that the review of taxi ranks and their hours of operation, including the local and practical issues associated with their provision, be progressed through the establishment of a working group, made up of representatives of the trade and officers who will report back to Members.

Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 In 2012 the Council commissioned a survey to study the use and demand on the Hackney Carriage service provided in the Maidstone Borough area. The survey report which was received in 2013 also highlighted a number of recommendations relating to associated issues, one of which was the number of taxi ranks and their location in the Borough.

1.3.2 The Survey's results recommended that consideration be given to extending the bays available at the rank in the High Street as this was the suggestion for the location for a new rank made by members of the public and drivers at the time. The results of the survey are attached as appendix A.

1.3.3 On 14/11/13 Members resolved that a review would take place as a result of both the survey and difficulties with researching historic creation of ranks to respond to a question from a PHV operator. The Minutes of that meeting are attached as Appendix B minute No 54b.

1.3.4 During the course of the survey it became apparent that the taxi rank provision should be investigated thoroughly as the regeneration of the

town centre highlighted the fact that the historic rank provision was causing confusion with the trade and public. An ideal opportunity to look at the current needs for provision had been presented and it was felt that the first step to take would be to ask the trade the following questions as part of a consultation survey to determine a start point in assessing what the current requirement is and what it should be.

Where do you believe the current ranks in Maidstone are situated?
Are they in the correct place?
Do you think any should be removed?
Where do you think any new ranks should be sited?
Other comments

1.3.5 The consultation period for the Hackney carriage proprietors started on 25 April 2014 and finished on 16 May 2014 and the two suggestions that arose from the majority of the trade were.

1) Establishing permanent taxi rank bays in the lower High Street following the completion of the High Street redevelopment.

2) Swapping the current taxi rank outside of 'Lush' in the upper High Street/top of Gabriel's Hill with the disabled parking spaces outside of NatWest Bank on the opposite side of the road.

1.3.6 Further consultations were undertaken where the two suggestions were specifically put along with a request for any further suggestions.

Those consulted were:-

1) Disabled and Community Groups – Consultation Period 11 – 22/08/14. This was a comprehensive postal questionnaire which went to 122 organisations and wider as they also sent it on to their distribution lists. Our distribution list included Police, Community Wardens, Community Safety Groups, Schools, Churches and various Trusts to name a few. The responses are attached as Appendix C.

2) Transport Integration stakeholders – Consultation Period 26/09 – 17/10/14. In total 26 letters were sent . The responses are attached as Appendix D.

1.3.7 There were 13 responses in total to these consultations, the summary of the results are:-

	Yes	No	Maybe	Did not answer the question
Q1	6	2	1	4
Q2	5	4	1	3

1.3.8 Based on the responses received, the current provision of ranks is no longer considered suitable for the Towns needs and alternative provision needs to be investigated and actioned. The Traffic

Regulations in place for designated taxi spaces that still exist and are regulated by Maidstone Borough Council are as follows:

Road	Side of Road	Description	Spaces	Times
1. King Street	North	From a point 10 metres east of its junction with Wyke Manor Road in an easterly direction for a distance of 40 metres	7	24 hours R
2. High Street	South	From a point 10 metres east of its junction with Gabriels Hill, in an easterly direction for a distance of 13 metres	2	24 hours R
3. Barker Road	South	From a point 11 metres east of the municipal car park in an easterly direction for a distance of 12 metres	2	Mon-Sun 7pm- 7am BS
4. Barker Road	South	From a point 39 metres east of the municipal car park in an easterly direction for a distance of 20 metres	3	Mon-Sun 7pm- 7am BS
5. Pudding Lane	East	From a point 26 metres south-east of its junction with Earl Street in a south- easterly direction for a distance of 39 metres	7	Mon-Sun Midnight - 7am BS
6. St Faiths Street	South	From a point 122 metres east of the junction with Fairmeadow for a distance of 29 metres	5	Mon-Sun Midnight - 7am BS
7. Earl Street	North	From a point 119 metres east of its junction with Fairmeadow in an easterly direction for a distance of 10 metres in an easterly direction	2	24 hours R
8. Earl Street	South	From a point 18 metres east of its junction with Fairmeadow for a distance of 31 metres in an easterly direction	5	Mon-Sun Midnight - 7am BS
9. Earl Street	South	From a point 56.5 metres east of its junction with Fairmeadow for a distance of 16 metres in an easterly direction	3	Mon-Sun Midnight - 7am BS

In summary there are 48 hackney vehicles licensed by Maidstone Borough Council and the provision for them is as follows:-

3x 24 hour ranks which provide 11 spaces

2x bus stops providing 5 spaces between 7pm and 7am

4 x bus stops providing 20 spaces between midnight and 7am

There is also Taxi Rank provision at the following train stations

Maidstone East - spaces for 9/10 vehicles
Maidstone West – understood to be 5 vehicles.

1.3.9 In relation to the current Taxi Rank provision the following has been observed by Officers:-

Road	Comment
1. King Street	During the day this is well used and often overcrowded. Drivers also park their vehicle on the opposite side of the road where the loading bays are. During the night-time economy it is often not used at all. Drivers park behind the two spaces situated outside Lush, often nose to tail and as far back as the Chequers entrance.
2. High Street	Always occupied, overcrowded during the night-time economy (see 1)
3. Barker Road	This is a bus stop between 7am and 7 pm, taxis can use it as a rank from 7pm. Understood to be used, not aware of any problems.
4. Barker Road	This is a bus stop between 7am and 7 pm, taxis can use it as a rank from 7pm. Understood to be used, not aware of any problems.
5. Pudding Lane	This is a bus stop from 7am to midnight, taxis can use it as a rank from midnight but it's never used.
6. St Faiths Street	This is a bus stop from 7am to midnight, taxis can use it as a rank from midnight but it's never used.
7. Earl Street	This is a rank but is never used.
8. Earl Street	This is a bus stop from 7am to midnight. Taxis can use it as a rank from midnight but it's never used.
9. Earl Street	This is a bus stop from 7am to midnight. Taxis can use it as a rank from midnight but it's never used.
10. Maidstone East	These are used by Taxi drivers who have purchased permits from South East Railways to do so. In the evening the Taxi drivers seem to queue at the bus stop in Week Street outside the KCC building rather than in Station Road
11. Maidstone West	Used, no problems known. Again permits are required from South East railways.
12 Earl Street	This was a rank but was never utilized, it is now a loading bay.

1.3.10 Observations have made it clear that during the night time economy there are only 9 spaces available at the busiest spots for the 48 Hackneys licensed by Maidstone Borough Council. We could look at providing better publicity and signage for both drivers and the public informing them of where Taxis can be positioned/found for hire.

1.3.11 The consultation with the trade, disability & focus groups and transport integration stakeholders has enabled a starting position to be established. In order to complete the review of taxi ranks and recommend any changes, it is proposed that a working group made up of elected members, representatives of the trade and officers.

1.3.12 Section 63(1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 states that:

"a District Council may from time to time appoint stands for hackney carriages for the whole or any part of the day on any highway maintainable at public expense and, with the consent of the owner, on any other land. From time to time, the Council may vary the number of hackney carriages permitted to be at each stand

1.3.13 These powers do not allow the Council to appoint stands:

- so as to unreasonably prevent access to premises;
- so as to impede the use of bus stops;
- on the highway without the consent of the highway authority

1.3.14 Before exercising its powers, the Council must give notice to the Police and publish the proposal in at least one local newspaper allowing 28 days for objections for representations to be made.

1.3.12 Once a Working Group is established proposed sites and any variations to current provision can be agreed and any consultations with others, including the Highways Authority and landowners at stations progressed, prior to publishing proposals and having regard to representations, appointing stands and putting traffic regulation orders and signing in place. The recommendations made by the working group will be presented to the Licensing Committee for consideration and approval.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The council could choose to do nothing but this is not recommended as it would fail to ensure the most appropriate provision of service for the public or meet the needs of the trade.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 A review of taxi rank provision in the Borough will have a positive impact on the economic vitality of the town by providing for efficient and effective sitings of ranks for the use of members of the public and provide clarity for the council and the trade.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 New creation of all ranks within the Borough will also reduce any risks associated with the need to evidence creation in any legal action related to them.

1.7 Other Implications

1. Financial	X
2. Staffing	
3. Legal	X
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6. Community Safety	
7. Human Rights Act	
8. Procurement	
9. Asset Management	

1.7.2 Financial – the cost of undertaking the review may have some financial implication in terms of consultation and any subsequent legal costs, publication of notices and other matters such as Traffic Regulation Orders and signage. These costs will be met from the existing licensing budget.

Legal – contained in body of report.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

- 1.8.2 Appendix A – Taxi driver survey results May 2014
- Appendix B – Minutes of 14.11.2014 meeting
- Appendix C - Disabled and Community Groups survey response
- Appendix D - Transport Integration stakeholders survey response

1.8.3 Background Documents

previous report, consultation letters etc.