

## ***Report to the Licensing Committee***

***Report reference: LSC-006-2010/11.***

***Date of meeting: 13 October 2010.***



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

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**Portfolio: Safer & Greener.**

**Subject: Quality Taxi Partnership Meeting – 2 September 2010.**

**Responsible Officer: Kim Tuckey (01992 564034).**

**Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).**

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### **Recommendations**

**To note the outcome of a meeting with the Essex County Quality Taxi Partnership(QTP) and the Taxi trade.**

#### **Report:**

1. In October 2009 the Senior Licensing Officer reported to the Licensing Committee that the District Council and Essex County Council had entered into a working joint partnership, known as the Quality Taxi Partnership (QTP). The QTP works with various agencies including the fire service who endorse the partnership aims. The QTP works to the governments National indicators of NI 7 relating to an Environment for a thriving third sector and NI 141 on number of people attaining independent living.
2. On 2 September 2010, one of the first open meetings was convened at Civic Offices with the QTP and the Licenced taxi trade. Attached are the minutes of that meeting for information at Appendix 1.

**MEETING OF EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL QUALITY TAXI  
PARTNERSHIP AND THE LICENSED TAXI TRADE**

**Date:** 2 September 2010

**Place:** Committee Room 2, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex.

**Attendees:**

**Epping Forest District Council** – Kim Tuckey (Senior Licensing Officer) (Chairman), Elizabeth Cox (Licensing Officer), Alison Mitchell (Assistant Director (Legal)),  
Richard

**Essex County Council** – Andrew James

**Essex Fire Service** – Gary Hale

**Saddlers Taxis** – Paul Nelson, Philip Saddler, Peter Saddler, Tim Weston

**Mayflower Taxis** – Ken Horlock

**Taxi Association** – Shawkat Ali, Jamie Goodman

**Bassett Cars** Mr Pryor

**Apologies:** Police

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Essex Police.

**2. INTRODUCTION OF TAXI ASSOCIATION/QUALITY TAXI PARTNERSHIPS**

Kim Tuckey made a brief introduction and set out the aims of the Partnership.

Andrew James from the Essex County Council Quality Taxi Partnership explained Essex County Council's role as the Highways Authority. He wanted to work with the meeting to lay standards which would be identified by the meeting and look at ways of getting funding to improve the taxi service. Any recommendations put forward by this meeting would have a slow response. There would be a need to bid for money, then go out for consultation prior to any decision being made. He warned that putting a new taxi rank in can take up to a year.

The representative from the Taxi Association stated that the Association was a group of independent drivers. There were forty drivers so far and they want the drivers to have a voice. One of the main points they wished to make was that they do not have an easy link with the Police and they would like this improved.

### **3. HACKNEY CARRIAGES OPERATING MAINLY OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT**

The Council have received complaints that Harlow operators are giving work to Epping Hackney Carriage drivers. The Council is awaiting a court ruling which should clarify the legality of this.

### **4. TAXI RANKS AND UNDERGROUND STATIONS**

There has been pressure to put taxi ranks at underground stations. However, London Underground owns the land and this is not a public highway. This means that it is for London Underground to administer the area. At the meeting, it was established that the only station where independents can operate is Buckhurst Hill and there appears to be an informal agreement with London Underground. The only rank in the area is outside Elite Cars which is mainly, if not exclusively, used by Elite Cars.

It was suggested that the meeting identify suitable places for taxi ranks. The Independent Taxi Association produced a list.

AGREED - The list would be attached to the minutes and the operators should be invited to comment and add to the list.

### **5. TAXI METERS PROS AND CONS**

The meeting was divided as to whether taxi meters would be advantageous. The Independent Taxi Association considered that they would be of assistance but those from the companies were mostly against.

### **6. VEHICLE INTERIM TESTS**

The Council reported that these were mostly being undertaken on time or after reminders sent.

### **7. DISABILITY AWARENESS**

Andrew James suggested that better access to taxis by deaf people could be achieved by the use of email and text messaging for booking taxis. The operating companies confirmed that they were looking at ways to introduce text messaging. The operating companies confirmed that they already used email and some were looking at introducing software for text messaging.

AGREED – If an operator consented, the Council would be happy to put the email addresses of those operators who have accepted email bookings on its website. Further information about booking by text could be included when this becomes available.

### **8. INTRODUCTION OF TAXI TESTS**

The meeting was mostly in favour. It was explained that the tests were multiple choice. If the operators or the Taxi Association wish to assist by providing more questions, with one correct and three incorrect answers, the Council would be happy to receive these.

## **9. VERBAL ABUSE AGAINST TAXI OFFICERS**

Kim Tuckey explained that there was a worrying trend in the past year of verbal abuse against Licensing Officers. This was noted.

## **10. WHAT WOULD EPPING FOREST DISTRICT TRADE LIKE TO IMPROVE AND WHAT EXAMPLES CAN BE GIVEN**

- More back-up was required from Essex Police. The meeting was disappointed that the Police representative was not there;
- More enforcement required – the Council will be doing more enforcement in the future. This will be done in two ways, visual and under cover and an operation has been scheduled to take place soon with the Police;
- Further signage on the vehicle. Passengers do not always realise that it is a licensed vehicle. Would like this to be a condition included in the Licence;
- Gary Hale from the Fire Service pointed out that the Fire Service had a need to communicate with vulnerable people. The Fire Service cannot knock on doors but a taxi driver will be taking elderly people, families from disadvantaged backgrounds and others with disabilities from a to b. On those occasions, they could ask if the passengers had working smoke alarms. The Fire Service are willing to visit and carry out a fire assessment for those people and give fire alarms free. They are asking that the taxi drivers give a card to them so that they could phone or send a card to make an appointment.

**ACTION** – Gary Hale will arrange for cards to be sent to the Epping Forest Licensing Service who will give them to new drivers and those renewing their Licence.

- Andrew James stated that he would wish to introduce the Quality Taxi Partnership sticker which could be given to taxi drivers to place in their vehicle. At future meetings, discussion could take place as to why a driver should be awarded the sticker. If there are complaints against the driver, it would be possible to remove the award. Essex County Council want to market the services of taxis who have the Quality Taxi Partnership logo.