

Cabinet

6 March 2017

Public Questions (2 total)

1.	Question from David Chambers, Cheltenham Taxi Drivers Association 2016, to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Grandfather Rights</p> <p>For many many years now there has only been a limited amount of Hackney vehicle licences (plates) available within the borough (currently 186) so anyone wishing to enter the trade would seek to buy an existing business, this traditionally involves the purchaser buying a licensed vehicle from an existing driver. The ownership of that vehicle would then be registered with licensing and from that point would enable the new owner to transfer that vehicle license (plate) to any other vehicle they may own. The average cost of buying a business over the past 5 years has been £10,000 but at it's peak reached £15,000. This practice has been accepted by the council for over 20 years and has worked well but now they wish to overturn it. The implications of this would mean that drivers that have invested in their business would see the value of their business disappear over night. Many of the drivers that have invested have done so knowing that the value of their business could be used towards a retirement fund or as a life insurance policy for their loved ones should anything happen to them.</p> <p>Our question is: Have the members of this cabinet been properly informed as to the current and historic licensing practices and are they comfortable knowing that if they decide to vote in favour of discontinuing the practice known as grandfather rights they will potentially wipe off in excess of £1,800,000 worth of value to the 180 plus business owners (taxi drivers) of this town and leave them with a depleted pension fund and /or with no life insurance ?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Cabinet is fully aware of the historical issues relevant to the public hire trade in Cheltenham including the previous cap on the number of licence issues in respect of hackney carriage vehicle licences and the consequence this cap had on the "value" of licence plates. Members have had numerous meetings with the trade directly where this has discussed at length and have been briefed by officers.</p> <p>The Cabinet report recognises implications of a decision to remove grand-father rights relevant to hackney carriages. The implications relate to both the cost of replacing vehicles and the impact this policy change will have on the "premium" that plate have demanded in the past.</p> <p>In respect of the first point, Cabinet will agree a series of measures to mitigate the impact of this policy change on licence holders including a proportionate implementation period of 4 years and the ability for some licence holders, who are required to replace their vehicles, to re-licence their vehicles as private hire vehicles.</p>

	<p>With regards to the second point, the council's position and view is set out in paragraphs 5.50 to 5.52 of the report.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Question from David Chambers, Cheltenham Taxi Drivers Association 2016, to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p>
	<p>Disabled access vehicles</p> <p>The proposal to make all Taxis in the town disabled access is within its self discriminative to both able bodied and disabled alike. Many disabled passengers wish to be treated the same as any other person and do not wish to bring attention to themselves. There should be freedom of choice for the public. There are dedicated companies who specialise in disabled transport and this would be the reason there are very few wheelchairs who actually use public hire disabled access vehicles. Some drivers that have obtained free access to the trade by having a wheelchair accessible vehicle despite having these vehicles for years, have never picked up a wheelchair. We have also had regular able bodied customers that refuse to get in these vehicles.</p> <p>We recently made a request to the council to stop issuing any more plates to these vehicles as the town is now swamped with taxis, and the vehicles being licensed are (in our view) not fit for purpose, but we were told they could not do this without an unmet demand survey which the trade would have to pay for, yet it is proposing to make all vehicles disabled access without doing the unmet demand survey they were insisting on. There has also not been an affordability study in relation to the costs involved to the trade, Councillor McKinley has said we can buy a used disabled access vehicle for about £7000 but that is for the vehicles that they are proposing to stop licensing (rear loading vehicles)and they do not meet the up coming Euro 6 emissions standards, currently vehicles meeting the councils criteria are in the region of £30,000 which is out of the reach of most drivers. Also the government actually recommend a mixed fleet of vehicles (Plymouth council can be used as an example of this).</p> <p>The secondary impact this ruling would have is to impose the end of grandfather rights (as described in question 1) as all disabled access vehicles can get a plate from the council. It is our view this is a stealth attempt to change the grandfather rites issue should the first proposal fail.</p> <p>Our question is: Do the members of this cabinet believe that a complete fleet of disabled taxis are required in what is a town not a city, and do they agree that to vote for this proposal without the presence of an unmet demand survey would be wrong as there is no evidence this policy is needed ?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>“Cabinet remains of the view that the council needs to be proactive in improving accessibility standards for the travelling public in Cheltenham. Grandfather rights have caused a stagnation of growth of accessibility standards. Cabinet is of the view that Government have been clear that local councils need to be proactive in improving accessibility standards.</p> <p>Through consultation the council have looked at various options giving consideration to the representations made to the council. Given the complexities</p>

<p>of the issues relating to grandfather rights, the council is considering a wide range of views and evidence in coming to its policy conclusions and would not wish to limit itself to a single piece of evidence.”</p>
