

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Licensing Committee – 5 January 2022

### Consultation on requirement to participate in schemes to promote better availability of licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs)

#### Report of the Licensing Team Leader

#### 1. Executive Summary and Recommendation

- 1.1 The authority is consulting on proposals to promote better availability of licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles in Cheltenham.
- 1.2 The Licensing Committee acts as lead consultee to the Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Regulatory Services. In this capacity, the Licensing Committee is given the opportunity to consider the consultation and respond as appropriate.
- 1.3 **The Committee is recommended to:**
- 1.3.1 **Note the consultation;**
- 1.3.2 **Formulate any response the Committee may wish to make for consideration by Cabinet.**

#### 1.4 Implications

Legal

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#### 2. Consultation on requirement to participate in schemes to promote better availability of licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs)

- 2.1 A copy of the consultation document is attached at **Appendix 1** of this report.
- 2.2 The consultation sets out proposals to improve the availability of licensed wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage vehicles.
- 2.3 The authority has received numerous complaints from people with a range of disabilities that they struggle to access wheelchair accessible vehicles when they need them. This makes it challenging for people with disabilities to go about their normal lives and undertake certain activities that require them to travel. These are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.4 The authority attempted on a number of occasions to engage with the licensed Hackney Carriage trade to develop a voluntary scheme to improve the availability of licensed Hackney Carriage WAVs. Officers advised the trade that if engagement with a voluntary scheme is poor, the authority might consider more formal arrangements to ensure people with disabilities have adequate access to licensed Hackney Carriage WAVs.
- 2.5 The response to a voluntary scheme was broadly disappointing with only a small minority willing to participate in a voluntary scheme. As a consequence, the authority is putting forward formal proposals to ensure provision is adequate for people with disabilities.

## **Additional licence condition for Hackney Carriage vehicle proprietors**

- 2.6 The authority proposes to include a licence condition on all licensed Hackney Carriage WAVs to the effect that they will be required to proactively participate in schemes and incentives to promote the availability of licensed WAVs.
- 2.7 The proposed condition would be: "Drivers of licensed wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage vehicles must proactively participate and subscribe to schemes and incentives to promote the availability of licensed wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage vehicles to users with disabilities."

### **Schemes and incentives - Use of smartphone application (app) to improve availability of licensed accessible vehicles**

- 2.8 The authority wants to employ the use of smartphone ride hailing technology to improve the availability of licensed Hackney Carriage WAVs to users with disabilities.
- 2.9 Subject to the imposition of a condition as outlined above, the authority will expect drivers of licensed Hackney Carriage WAVs to subscribe, and proactively participate in, the use of such a smartphone ride hailing app.
- 2.10 Under this proposal, the authority will procure and set up such an app. The authority will expect all drivers of licensed Hackney Carriage WAVs to sign up and make themselves available during the times when they are usually available for hiring.
- 2.11 The use of a smartphone app is considered to be the most effective means of improving the availability of licensed Hackney Carriage WAVs. The travelling public are, generally speaking, increasingly familiar with the use of smartphone ride hailing apps. There are already a number in use in the town, suggesting that, broadly speaking, licence holders are also familiar with this technology.

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**Background Papers**

Service Records

**Report Author**

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