

## Wolverhampton City Council

**OPEN INFORMATION ITEM**

Committee / Panel	<b><u>LICENSING COMMITTEE</u></b>	Date	<b><u>04/04/2012</u></b>
Originating Service Group(s)	<b><u>EDUCATION AND ENTERPRISE</u></b>		
Contact Officer(s)/	<b><u>COLIN PARR</u></b>		
Telephone Number(s)	<b><u>0105</u></b>		
Title/Subject Matter	<b><u>ENHANCING THE CITY CENTRE NIGHT TIME OFFER</u></b>		

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**SUMMARY**

This report details proposals to enhance the night time offer of the City Centre. The infrastructure of the City Centre's night time economy, particularly access to transportation, is expected to come under intense pressure during the summer of 2012 with a number of significant national events scheduled.

In order to ensure that the supply of transportation services can meet the expected demand of visitors to the City Centre during the summer, the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity has agreed to reintroduce a Taxi Marshalling Service at peak times in the City Centre from 1 April 2012.

# **ENHANCING THE CITY CENTRE NIGHT TIME OFFER**

## **1. PURPOSE**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- (i) Highlight the expected strains that will be placed on the City Centre's night time economy infrastructure due to a series of national events during the summer of 2012.
- (ii) Advise Members of the current position of Taxi Marshalling provision in the City Centre.
- (iii) Update Members of a Green Decision to re-introduce routine Taxi Marshalling arrangements for an initial six month pilot period.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 Due to several events of national significance, some with direct local implications, the infrastructure of the City Centre's night time economy is expected to come under intense pressure during the summer of 2012.

2.2 These events include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 2012 London Olympic Games
- Olympic Torch Relay
- 2012 Cultural Olympiad
- UEFA European Championships
- Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

2.3 Each of these events is expected to generate visitors to the City Centre. This will either be directly, as is the case with the Olympic Torch Relay event, which will pass through Wolverhampton in June. Alternatively these events may indirectly attract visitors, as is the case with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, where the Government have announced an additional Bank Holiday and granted special exemptions to licensing laws.

2.4 In addition to this several new licensed premises have either opened or are scheduled to open in the coming months. These new premises are expected to add to the night time economy offer and together with the events detailed above attract a broader range of visitors to the City Centre's night time economy.

## **3. CAPACITY AND PROVISION OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY**

3.1 The expected increase in visitors to the night time economy will create additional demand for the provision of late night transportation facilities.

3.2 The City Centre has experienced various issues associated with a lack of capacity and access to safe late night transport for several years, these issues include;

- crime and disorder occurring in the vicinity of taxi ranks
- long disorganised queues for Hackney Carriage services
- poor facilities to pre-book private hire services
- high levels of illegal plying for hire

- 3.3 Since removing the numerical limit on Hackney Carriage licences on 19 October 2005 the Council has seen some limited growth in the City's Hackney Carriage fleet, however at peak times there are still insufficient vehicles to immediately cater for demand. This contributes to the problems outlined above as people wait at busy ranks for limited services; this often leads to disputes amongst those in the queues.
- 3.4 The Council continues to work with partners and the trade to develop late night transportation services appropriate for the needs of the City. However, this is a medium term endeavour and the policy changes required will take several years to become fully established.
- 3.5 As such it has been agreed by the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity that in order to ensure that visitors to the City Centre for the various events listed above do not encounter difficulties when acquiring late night transportation, that the Taxi Marshalling Service is reintroduced, on an initial six month basis, from 1 April 2012.

#### **4.0 TAXI MARSHALLING SERVICE**

- 4.1 Between October 2006 and March 2008 the Council delivered a Taxi Marshalling Service. The service operated at two locations, on two nights, covering both the early and late night economies and catered for both the Hackney Carriage and private hire trades.
- 4.2 Due to the high costs of delivering such a comprehensive scheme funding could not be located for 2008/09 to continue the service. As such regular Taxi Marshalling was withdrawn on 31 March 2008.
- 4.3 Since 1 April 2008 Taxi Marshalling services have been provided on an ad hoc basis to cater for particular circumstances. For example the service was delivered as part of the 2009, 2010 and 2011 Keep it Safe campaigns.
- 4.4 It is proposed that to assist with alleviating the strains expected to be placed on the City Centre's night time infrastructure, that the service is reintroduced on a regular basis, initially on a six month basis, from 1 April 2012.
- 4.5 The service will operate from 0030 – 0430 hrs on both Saturday and Sunday mornings. This will involve three marshals operating from the Market Street taxi rank, providing assistance to visitors seeking either Hackney Carriage or private hire services.
- 4.6 The operation, activities and objectives of the marshals will be consistent with those previously agreed in 2006.
- 4.7 Based on the success of the initial six month period, it is planned to explore opportunities to deliver the service on a permanent basis through developments to other licensing functions.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are direct financial implications arising from this report. The cost of delivering the Taxi Marshalling Service as detailed above at Section 4 would be £8,700 for the duration of the six months. This is to be funded from the Southside Intervention Plan budget of £1.900M approved by Cabinet 25 May 2011; this budget is to be used to finance activities that promote regeneration in the City Centre.

[JJ/22032012/O]

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The taxi marshalling scheme will not undermine provisions within the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 or any associated legislation. [SH/21032012/C]

## **7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An equalities impact assessment is currently in place for the Taxi Marshalling Service, this identifies no negative equalities implications associated with the service.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

## **9. SCHEDULE OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

*Trial Taxi Marshalling Scheme*, Licensing Committee, 27 September 2006  
*Pilot Taxi Marshalling Scheme*, Licensing Committee, 26 September 2007  
*Evaluation of Taxi Marshalling Service*, Licensing Committee, 11 June 2008