



Walsall Council

LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

18th APRIL 2007

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PUBLIC PROTECTION

TAXI MARSHALLING SCHEME

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT:

1.1 The report is to inform Committee of the introduction of a pilot taxi marshalling scheme in Walsall town centre which is being funded through the Walsall Strategic Partnership Local Area Agreement.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

2.1 The Committee is recommended to consider the report and endorse its objectives.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

3.1 Within budget: Financed by money allocated from Local Area Agreements fund.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 Within Council Policy: Yes.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 None

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 None.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

7.1 None

8.0 WARD(S) AFFECTED:

8.1 All.

9. CONSULTEES:

9.1 Drivers and members of the public and police have been consulted by means of meetings, questionnaires and press release inviting comments.

10.0 BACKGROUND

10.1 With the increased popularity of the late night economy in Walsall is growing and along with this there has been an increase in reported alcohol related disorder.

10.2 The taxi licensing office receives information from licensed drivers and the public about associated problems on the taxi ranks. Problems reported include:

- One or two customers booking the vehicle and then a group of friends getting in too. Often this will be more passengers than the vehicle is licensed to carry but when the driver tries to ask them to get out, the customers can get aggressive.
- Customers failing to pay for the journey
- Customers getting in taxis all along the rank, rather than going to the front
- Drivers failing to set the meter and overcharging
- Drivers refusing to take short journey fares

10.3 These problems are common to those experienced in many towns and cities. In a number of these, a taxi marshalling scheme has been introduced.

10.4 Taxi Marshals are employed to supervise and manage the queuing on taxi ranks. The benefits which can be seen in areas where they have operated successfully include:

- Improved efficiency in loading passengers into vehicles resulting in shorter waiting times for both drivers and passengers
- Supervision of the queues to reduce queue jumping

- An official presence to provide reassurance to passengers and improved feeling of personal safety
- An official presence that may be able to identify aggressive behaviour and call for early police assistance before a situation escalates
- Fewer opportunities for large groups getting in taxis when only one or two passengers had arranged the fare
- Fewer opportunities for drivers to fail to set the meter or to overcharge
- Increased confidence by passengers in the trade and therefore potential increase in business
- Improved efficiency in getting passengers out of town at the end of the night and thereby reducing the numbers of people loitering and reduction in potential flash points

- 10.5 A pilot scheme is being introduced in Walsall which will operate on Friday and Saturday nights throughout the year. In addition and subject to a successful evaluation of the first phase, it is anticipated that it will operate on extra nights in December and when there are local and national events which may increase the demand.
- 10.6 It is a Neighbourhood Services and Public Protection Pledge for 2007/08 to trial such a scheme in Walsall.
- 10.7 The scheme is commencing in April 2007 and will run for an initial pilot period of three months. During this time the scheme will be evaluated. Adjustments to how it operates may be made during this time.
- 10.8 The scheme is being advertised by means of posters to be displayed in a variety of town centre premises, community centres on buses and by posters. A copy of the poster is attached as appendix A.
- 10.9 At the end of this pilot period, if the scheme is shown to be a success, then the funds will be released to run it for the rest of the year.
- 1.9 The scheme is primarily aimed at the late night hackney carriage ranks. Initially these will be Lichfield Street and Bradford Place.
- 10.10 For those customers who prefer to take a private hire vehicle there is a card which contains the names and telephone numbers of all the private hire operators within the borough. These will be available in licensed premises for customers to pre-book their journey. A copy of this card is attached as appendix B.

11.0 CONTACT OFFICER.

11.1 Lorraine Boothman – Senior Principal Trading Standards Officer. Ext. 2259.

12.0 ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A Copy of poster

Appendix B Copy of card detailing private hire operators