

SCC Licensing Committee 'Written Responses' from Forum on 22nd Feb '23

- 1. We need a new Southampton Transport Act to include electric/Hybrid cars, plus diesel, extended age of vehicle and to do away with the corporate colour of white for hackney carriages. It is unfair business practice when so many cars from neighbouring areas have now copied our colour of white.*

The relevant Cabinet lead and Chair of the Licensing committee have considered the request to change the colour of Southampton's Hackney Cars. We have been minded by public safety, which suggests that clearly identifiable taxis are good for public safety as they are clearly identifiable and a natural refuge point for if needed. We are also minded that other local authorities use specific colours, and we have not seen consistent evidence that clearly suggests that the costs for another colour of taxi would be cheaper, with officers reporting arguments for and against. There would also need to be a lengthy and considered design process to decide any new colour so that it slotted in appropriate with our wider corporate colours and business policies.

With all this in mind, we do not anticipate changing the colour at present. We appreciate that other authorities may have a similar colour, but we feel that this is just the luck of the draw and that there would be nothing to stop them also changing their colours in the future.

We can also assure the trade that we are very aware of the national and local targets that exist to phase out combustion vehicles in the UK over the next few years and we have our own proactive targets to reduce air pollution within Southampton. We are actively looking into the electric infrastructure needed to support this, guided by national government legislation and guidance, and within this we will continue to consider the needs of the trade.

- 2. Council needs to contribute towards the cost of CCTV in our licenced vehicles.*

Southampton City Council, like most other local authorities, are facing very tough financial challenges at present and all costings must be managed closely. We also need to be wary of the fairness of any spend that we commit to. To spend money subsidising the trade in this way would seem unfair and disproportionate to other businesses and industries within the City, who might legitimately ask why we were not contributing towards their key costs in similar ways. We are also confident in the procurement processes that officers undertake with suppliers to keep costs as fair for the trade as possible, and this process is scrutinised as well through our own governance.

- 3. Extend the life of vehicle age.*

Southampton City Council will always put passenger safety first when making our taxi and licensing policies. We will use data and evidence to support these decisions and will also be guided by national transport policy. Although we will never set timelines for the maximum age of vehicles arbitrarily, the evidence and guidance does not support the extending of the age limit to vehicles at present. A recent spot-check of the condition of vehicles was further evidence when a large proportion of the vehicles inspected failed the spot check.

We have looked at this in detail, as was promised at the recent taxi forum meeting. We understand that taxi drivers face a very tough economic time at present and will always consider ways to make things slightly easier for them, but we must always prioritise passenger safety, which does not support an increase in the age.