

Agenda Item

REPORT OF Head of Communities and Place
To: Community and Resources committee
Subject: Taxi Rank Provision on Bideford Quay Car Park
Date: 23rd January 2023 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

For the Committee to re consider the decision to allow taxis to use the concrete apron of the Quay to wait for space to become available on the main taxi rank at Bideford Quay.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the Licensing Committee held on 24 July 2019 it was agreed to set up a task and finish group to review taxi rank provision. A recommendation by the group was presented to the Licensing Committee held on 23 October 2019. Licensing Committee agreed to refer the recommendation to Community and Resources Committee for a decision.

A report was presented to community and Resources Committee on the 25th November 2019.

The resolution was not implemented, for reasons explained below, and the requirement has since changed so there is an opportunity to reconsider the situation.

2. REPORT

The 25th November 2019 report presented the following information;

The taxi rank on Bideford Quay has been in its current position since 2003. The rank only has capacity for approximately 8 taxis at any one time. At that time there were 49 taxis licensed by the Authority. For many years the Licensing Team along with taxi representatives and the Licensing Committee had attempted to establish additional rank space for taxis but without success. Prior to 2016 a feeder rank system was provided behind the harbour office for taxis to wait for access to the main rank but this was withdrawn by the Community and Resources Committee at its meeting held on 26 September 2016 due to safety concerns. There had been a number of incidents and near misses as taxis exited the entrance to the car park.

Prior to the November 2019 report a task and finish group, consisting of 4 members of the Licensing Committee, met along with three representatives from the taxi trade and discussed various options in relation to additional rank space.

It was agreed that their preferred option would be to establish a feeder rank system on the concrete apron area of the quay side. **Appendix A** provides a map of the area and the proposed system.

At the time, the Environmental Health and Community Safety Manager raised serious reservations about the option put forward. The feeder rank would be counter to the advertised flow of vehicles along the quay giving rise to additional risks:

- To pedestrians crossing the entrance to the car park – with the prominent entry signage at that end, the attention of pedestrians will reasonably be on the road rather than on the quay. While a vehicle exiting the entrance would have to be extra vigilant, there are also concerns in relation to TDC liability should an accident occur.
- Generally to users and pedestrians as it may not be immediately obvious to other drivers that the reverse flow is for taxi drivers only leading to those drivers not adhering to the one way system. The vigilance employed by the taxi trade may not be in place more generally.

Similar one-way systems are in operation at both Bridge Street and Bank End Car parks; this is an established safety measure.

The Environmental Health and Community Safety Manager made the following statement in relation to the proposal

“I appreciated the frustrations of the taxi trade and the reasons for the recommendation however Committee need to consider the wider implications, and potential liabilities to TDC, from putting in place such a scheme, even on a trial basis.”

At Committee on the 25th November 2019 the following discussion and resolution was arrived upon:

58. TAXI RANK PROVISION

When discussing this matter, the following points/concerns were raised:

- *Health and safety issues – taxis existing the entrance*
- *Signage – concerns these would be ignored. It will be advisory signage, not legal and cannot be enforced as not on Devon County Highways land*
- *Alternative locations were suggested*
- *This to be for taxis only and to ensure taxi drivers are aware there will be no right turns*

It was acknowledged this is an issue that had been ongoing for a number of years, and the conclusion reached was, that although not an ideal option it was the best solution.

It was proposed that a twelve month monitoring period be included in the recommendation.

It was proposed by Councillor Hicks, seconded by Councillor Bushby and –

Resolved:

That the following option recommended by the Taxi Rank Task and Finish Working Group be agreed:

“That a feeder rank system be established on the concrete apron area of the Quay side, as shown on Appendix A attached to the report, for a monitoring period of 12 months”.

(Vote: For 10, Against 2)

Demand

Since the time of that above resolution there has been a significant shift in demand for taxi ranking space. It is also worth noting that the 3 yearly taxi demand study was undertaken last year and identified a significant reduction in public demand from the rank. This in turn has resulted in a reduction in the number of taxis operating from the rank.

It was not clear from the survey if this was still as residual effect of the covid pandemic or whether this would be the new normal.

Given that the market requirement has changed, officers are now recommending that there is no pressing need to pursue the provision of a rank on the Quay, with the associated safety risks, enforcement issues and costs, at this time.

Should demand increase the situation can be revisited but it is unlikely that officers would ever recommend the solution resolved upon to committee in the future. An alternative would be sought by seeking greater cooperation from DCC.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

Potential TDC liability in the event of an accident as a result of the feeder rank system.

The Council is not legally obliged to provide a taxi rank on it's car park.

The Off Street Parking Places Order will need to be changed to allow ranking on the concrete plinth.

Financial Implications

There will be a need to provide signage and line markings but cost would be minimal

Human Resources Implications

None

Sustainability Implications

It is possible that the provision of the feeder rank on the Quay will mean that any future EV charging points will be located in less desirable and more costly locations.

Equality/Diversity

None

Risk Management

Any decision will need to balance public safety, public finance, compliance with legislation and potential damage to reputation.

The public would not be able to drive in both directions within the car park but taxis would be able to do so. Likewise for parking on the concrete plinth. There is a high degree of risk that this will lead to enforcement problems and conflict on the car park at busy times.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

All regulatory activity will be carried out in accordance with current policy and procedures.

The proposal is not compliant with the Off-street Parking Places Order.

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

None

Lead Member Views

Councillor Hicks – Consulted 13/01/23

Comment to follow.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In 2019 the task and finish group identified a number of options to solve a problem that was relevant at that time but and was decided that the option detailed in the report was the only cost-effective solution despite the significant safety implications it presented.

The resolution of Community and resources committee was never implemented because the Covid Pandemic forced a change of priority.

Post pandemic the requirement for taxi ranking has reduced and there is no longer the same requirement for a feeder rank.

The Health and Safety and car park management problems that that proposal present remain and would be difficult to overcome.

Officers have been investigating the introduction of EV chargers into the car park and this proposal would limit the siting opportunities for those and increase the charges of installation accordingly.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of reduced demand and the considerable safety challenges associated with implementation of their previous resolution, it is recommended that:

Committee determine whether or not to pursue their resolution of the 25th November 2019.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: SMT

Contact Officer: Chris Parkhouse

Background Papers: Licensing data area/files