



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(Epsom & Ewell)**

Taxi Issues in Epsom

12th September 2011

KEY ISSUE

To update the Local Committee on Taxi issues in Epsom.

SUMMARY

This report informs members on current discussions on Taxi issues in Epsom and identifies how these issues are being taken forward.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the content of the report
- (ii) Agree the approach outlined in Section 2 with a view to discussing improvements further with the Borough and other stakeholders

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

At the July 2009 Local Committee approval was given to provide late night taxi ranks (9pm to 4am) in Upper High Street and High Street, Epsom. At the time no objections were made, the proposals were advertised and subsequently brought to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Environment Committee. Some Objections were raised that they weren't in the most suitable locations but no further locations could be proposed by the Highway Authority other than those already approved by Local Committee, subsequently the ranks were installed. Suggestions were made for the dual usage of bus stop clear ways over night to double up as taxi ranks however the County Council had concerns over doing this and they were not taken forward.

In March this year the Local Committee resolved to keep the recently installed ranks in High St and Upper High St. The Local Committee also resolved to call for an additional late night taxi rank (9pm to 4am) for licensed hackney carriages in the area occupied by bus stops B and C (outside Kingfish and Café Rouge).

In April this year the County Council were approached by the Epsom Taxi Rank Association to discuss various taxi issues within Epsom, the meeting was also attended by Cllr Taylor. The key issues raised were -

- High Street & Upper High Street, Epsom – Low usage of ranks
- High Street near Clocktower – provision of taxi ranks with bus stop area.
- Downs Road, Epsom – provision of taxi ranks
- Station Approach – Continual issues regarding the Epsom Station Development

A key player in the provision of Taxi Ranks is the Borough Council as licensing authority. It is vital therefore that the two authorities work together to bring about the most pragmatic solution. Typically the steps involved in creating a taxi rank are:

- a) Officer discussion between the two authorities on suitable sites, this would typically include liaising on the proposal with the affected Local Member(s)
- b) Once suitable sites are identified the Borough Licensing Committee agree the sites and advertise proposals
- c) Depending upon the restrictions in place it may be that an amendment needs to be made to an existing Traffic Regulation Order and this would require Local Committee sign-off. In reality this would typically result in the Local Committee considering all new taxi ranks as it would be rare for a taxi rank to be located where there is not already some form of restriction in place

2 ANALYSIS

Given the long running issue of taxis in Epsom each location is taken in turn and a proposed way forward for future dialogue is given with the Borough and where appropriate other stakeholders. This does differ slightly than in the steps above but it is considered such an emotive issue it would benefit from Committee giving a steer at this stage.

High Street & Upper High Street – Low usage of bays

Although there is a perceived low usage of the bays, it is proposed that the status quo remain at least until there are firm proposals to increase taxi provision in Epsom (see below). If taxi rank provision can be increased elsewhere in the High St these should be removed.

High Street near Clocktower – provision of taxi ranks within bus stop area

In line with the March 2011 resolution consultation has occurred with Passenger Transport relating to the dual use of the Bus Stop Clearway and their recommendation is that the status quo remain because it could lead to abuse and confusion during the day. Such a restriction would also require Special Authorisation from DfT. The Local Committee is therefore asked to review its previous resolution prior to the matter being taken any further with the Borough.

Downs Road, Epsom – provision of taxi ranks

This issue has been ongoing for several years. The Borough Council approached SCC to provide a rank large enough for 5 taxis at the southern end of Downs Road near Grandstand Road in 2006. At the time there was a consultation with the Downs Conservators who did not approve of the taxi rank bays being marked out for what was seen as a once a year event at the Grandstand. However, since the

development of the Grandstand, there are in the region of 800 events per year ranging from private parties to large public events. In addition there are now 15 race meetings per annum.

A large proportion of visitors to the venue do so via the train station and hackney carriage. Taxis can only legally pick up passengers either by being hailed when their "For Hire" sign is illuminated or when they are standing on an authorised taxi rank. There is adequate space and the location is preferred to the taxi drivers on Derby Day where it is easier to turn and head north along Downs Road than in the area allocated for the past 2 Derby Festivals. However, by introducing ranks here it is considered necessary to improve the waiting facilities for those waiting for a taxi. The location has a steep grass verge and no designated footway/level area to wait safely. It is therefore proposed that discussion takes place with affected stakeholders to explore the possibilities for improving provision in Downs Road, including the Local Member.

Station Approach

Epsom Station is currently being redeveloped. There are temporary traffic management arrangements in place to allow construction to take place. Bus stops have been removed and the taxi ranks which previously were on the private forecourt of the station have been located on the opposite side of Station Approach outside Emperor House. Requests were made to alter the road layout and to change the approved planning drawings. It would not be possible to alter the planned permanent arrangements at this stage given that planning approval has already been given. However, it is proposed that we monitor the situation to ascertain if there is any adverse impact on the traffic / taxi movement in Station Approach, if so seeking to undertake alternative measures.

3 CONSULTATION

This report has been drafted following previous discussion at Local Committee, feedback from the Epsom Taxi Rank Association and Colin Taylor. Initial discussion has also taken place with the Borough Council and Surrey County Council Officers in Passenger Transport.

4 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

The main value for money implications for SCC would be associated with Officer time involved in ongoing liaison and if the Downs Rd proposal was taken forward the need for funding to be secured to allow the safe waiting facilities to be provided.

5 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no equalities and diversity implications arising from this report.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The location of Taxi Ranks in Epsom is clearly an emotive issue and the Local Committee is therefore asked to give a steer for Officers to work to. The proposed way forward is therefore as outlined in Section 2. In essence therefore

- Keep the existing taxi ranks until such time as capacity is increased.
- Review the Committee's previous decision to progress taxi ranks in the bus stop clearways.
- Consult with appropriate stakeholders on the scope to improve the situation on Downs Rd.
- To monitor the impact of the redevelopment of the Station and then only if necessary amend the agreed layout.

8 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Subject to the above dialogue will continue with the Borough Council and Surrey County Council. Any progress will be given via the Highways Update standing item unless there are changes proposed to existing Traffic Regulation Orders at which point the Committee would need to consider them prior to any change being made.

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