MINUTES OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE STANDS TASK GROUP

3 DECEMBER 2014

PRESENT:

Councillors Butlin, Mrs Garcia, Mistry, Mrs Roodhouse and Sandison

Sean Lawson (Head of Environmental Services), David Burrows (Regulatory Services Manager), Paul Ansell (Scrutiny Officer) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer)

Note – These minutes are a record of the task group’s discussion. Comments recorded do not necessarily represent the views of the task group or the council.

8. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October were approved and signed by the Chairman.

9. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Buckley.

10. SURVEY RESULTS

Several external organisations had submitted evidence to the task group since the despatch of the agenda so an updated briefing paper and appendices were circulated to the task group.

Fifty questionnaires had been received covering a range of categories including the frequency of use and time of day, though there were few responses from late night users.

It was acknowledged that this level of response was too small to draw conclusions about the opinions and experiences of the different groups of people but it was useful evidence to view the overall picture and feedback on the feelings people have in relation to the taxi ranks.

Responses were received from hackney carriage users and drivers, Rugby First and street pastor team leaders.

The task group considered the summary of responses contained in the updated briefing paper noting that the view of the majority supported the view that there is a need for more taxi rank provision in the town centre.
11. ADDITIONAL PROVISION – IS IT NEEDED?

During discussion the task group concentrated on additional taxi rank provision and the following points were made:

One common consultation suggestion for the site of an additional rank was the High Street/Sheep Street area. However, some concerns were raised regarding the safety of pedestrians and issues of conflict similar to those that occur at the Clock Tower rank.

It was noted that after 4pm High Street and Sheep Street were no longer pedestrianised and were normal highways, subject to legal speed limits.

It was agreed that the task group should formulate a short list of streets/areas where additional provision might be provided and officers would gather the necessary technical and supporting background information to allow members to make a more informed decision.

Members requested that representatives from Warwickshire County Council Highways team and Warwickshire Police be invited to the next meeting when the options would be considered further.

Topics to consider further, when discussing the sites of ranks included highways issues (including known future changes), safety concerns, user acceptability and time of operation.

It was agreed the review should consider both day and night time provision.

A representative from RHODA, the local taxi association, and drivers expressed the following opinions:

- The hackney trade should be considered as a business serving the public and not treated as an object.

- There are one or two spaces at Asda, Tesco and Sainsbury’s but they are not used by the public who prefer to continue their shopping in the town centre and pick up hackney carriages at the Clock Tower rank. The spaces at Asda are underground and this is not ideal.

- The Clock Tower rank has been the preferred site for many years. Drivers have adopted a system of driving around the block to feed the rank from one side only.

- The taxi trade has carried out its own survey which indicated that customers were content with using the Clock Tower rank. It was possible to use this rank without having to cross the road.

- In the past the police operated a ‘starburst’ style scheme but this was not successful as it created more issues.

- There was support for the siting of a rank on Albert Street providing it was properly marked.
• Market Place, next to the Clock Tower, had been used during road closures with some success, although there was an issue with the siting of a hot food stall.

• A suggestion was made that the existing Clock Tower rank could be extended as far as possible towards St Andrew’s Church. However, there were statutory obligations for road markings in relation to the pedestrian crossing that needed to be considered.

Members were advised that the area between Regent Street and Chestnut Field has one of the highest town centre accident rates across the West Midlands.

Members asked about the use of the rank outside New Look and were informed by the representative from RHODA that this was not ideal as it faced the wrong direction and privately owned vehicles were often parked there.

The hackney carriage representatives were asked how many vehicle spaces would be required and they responded this was between ten and twelve at peak time. When asked to define peak time the response was that this was a difficult question to answer and demand existed over a 24 hour period.

A comment was made that tensions existed at the Clock Tower rank between drivers and the public and work was required to improve the trade’s image.

It was noted that all hackney carriages available for hire can be hailed in the street.

It might be possible for some existing bus stop provision to be utilised as a dual use space.

12. ADDITIONAL PROVISION – DRAWING UP A SHORTLIST

The task group agreed the following list as suggestions for additional provision:

- Extend the Clock Tower rank
- Asda/Art Gallery and Museum area
- High Street/Sheep Street
- Albert Street/Regent Street/Bank Street area – excluding Henry Street
- Little Church Street
- Dual purpose ranks
- Castle Street
- North Street

It will be necessary to support any decisions made with clear evidence.

Officers will liaise with the relevant organisations and seek to produce a factual case for each option for further consideration by the task group.
13. **BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed the next meeting of the task group would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 4 February to further consider the shortlisted additional taxi rank locations, provided responses from Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Police had been received.

CHAIRMAN