PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs Garcia (Chairman), Butlin, 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.

16. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

17. APOLOGIES

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

18. CONSIDERATION OF SHORTLISTED PROPOSALS FOLLOWING COMMENTS BY WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Warwickshire County Council officers had previously indicated they were not satisfied with the original list of seven areas identified by the task group as being possible locations for additional taxi rank provision, but were open to further discussion regarding specific proposals. Therefore, at its meeting on 4 February the task group narrowed the list down to the following areas:

- Church Street
- North Street
- Regent Street, Bank Street or top of Albert Street

The task group considered the plans appended to the agenda of each of the specific proposed areas along with the response received from WCC.

The task group noted that WCC officers had been sent the agenda but had not been expected to attend the meeting.

Following an exchange with WCC regarding the feasibility of extending the taxi rank on Church Street towards the road crossing, and despite the discovery of evidence in London boroughs of this having been done, WCC was insistent this
would cause a conflict between users and would not be prepared to approve an extension.

WCC would support the proposals for the dual use of bus stops, subject to Stagecoach’s agreement.

Despite the efforts of officers to contact Stagecoach by telephone, email and by post no response had been received. On the basis of past experience, it seemed unlikely that Stagecoach would support dual use.

An issue regarding the cost of temporary ranks was raised by the RHODA representative but it was agreed this was not a matter for this group.

The task group considered plans showing the shortlisted locations.

Plan 1 – Albert Street
It was agreed this area was favourable and it would be possible to provide between four and five bays. Taxis would also be able to access the main rank with ease. Subject to the agreement of adjacent businesses, WCC had no objections to converting pay and display areas outside of the charging period but it was unlikely 24 hour provision would be supported. There are several restaurants and bars nearby which make it a suitable location for customers.

A representative from RHODA, the local taxi association, commented that this location could act as a feed onto the main rank at the Clock Tower and help ease pressure, and it had the potential to encourage trade although it needed to be a 24 hour rank. It was suggested, that the possibility of 24 hour operation be looked at after six months of operation as a night time rank.

Plan 2 – Bank Street
The use of disabled parking bays would not be supported by WCC.

Plan 3A and 3B – Regent Street
The west side (3A) consisted of disabled bays and again would not be supported by WCC.
The east side (3B) was considered to be a suitable location due to its close proximity to restaurants and bars and it would help to generate a new pattern of behaviour for customers. This area was a loading bay but WCC had raised no objections to it being converted to dual use, subject to the agreement of adjacent businesses. Members raised some concerns regarding road safety and the amount of street furniture in the area but it was acknowledged that this would be covered as part of the wider consultation that would be required at a later stage.

Plan 4A and 4B – Church Street extension of existing rank and bus stand J
As minuted above extending the existing rank and the dual use of bus stops were unlikely to be successful.

Plan 5 – Church Street bus stand K
Concerns were raised about how the area would be used and whether this would be a feeder for other ranks or used as a pick-up point.
The representative from RHODA commented that this would not be a suitable location as there was a crossing point nearby and vehicles would attempt to turn in the road to reach the rank.

Plan 6 and 7 – North Street bus stands E, D, G, F and H
As minuted above WCC would only the dual use of bus stops if Stagecoach did not object

Plan 8 – Little Church Street loading bay
This location had previously been dismissed by the task group but had still been submitted to WCC for their comments. WCC would not support it because of the narrowness of the street.

The representative from RHODA informed the task group that feedback from the trade indicated that the only site they would favour would be Albert Street but if this was not to be used over a 24 hour period this would not help to ease congestion at the main rank during the day.

The task group agreed that a recommendation of the review should be that the following locations should be pursued further:

- Albert Street (plan 1)
- East side of Regent Street (plan 3B)

Daytime provision was still important and extending the use of the proposed rank sites to a 24 hour period should be reviewed again after a set period.

The review also aimed to re-educate users and the trade on how private hire and hackney carriage services could be used.

If a hackney carriage was standing in a rank it was available for hire. If the ‘for hire’ light was on, a taxi driving on the street could be hailed. If the taxi did not stop customers were able to complain to the council. Private hire vehicles must be pre-booked and customers needed to understand the difference between private hire and hackney carriages

A recommendation of the review should be that officers draw up a promotional campaign on these and other related matters.

19. BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the task group had concluded its work and did not need to meet again. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to prepare a draft review report and circulate this to members of the task group before consideration by the Customer and Partnerships Committee in September and prior to submission to Cabinet.

CHAIRMAN