

Cabinet – 15 February 2024

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

When asked by a member of the public, himself a hackney carriage driver, what steps were being addressed to stop private hire drivers using the word 'taxi' you said:

“This has not been enforced well enough to date and the council is now taking proactive enforcement action for such a breach of the operator licence.”

Can you please tell me what proactive steps have been taken to deal with this issue following that meeting?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

All Private Hire Vehicles that had the stickers with the word “taxi” have received replacement signage compliant with Operator conditions.

Any Private Hire (PH) Operator who advertises using the word taxi or cab has received a visit to provide verbal advice, PH Operators who have continued to be in breach of the condition have also received stronger enforcement measures.

However, this has not happened as quickly as I would like, and it is evident to me that this continues to happen and therefore, I will intervene for this matter to be dealt with by the subcommittee to ensure it is stopped without further delay.

Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:

What intervention can be taken and how long will it take?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

The Sub Committee can review licences where operators do not comply.

2 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

In the same meeting another member of the public raised the issue as I have previously about the issue of Wolverhampton licences operating in Harlow. I have subsequently been made aware that taxis with Epping Forest and Uttlesford licences are also operating in Harlow.

Although this is less unusual can I ask what steps are being taken to ensure that all taxis operating in Harlow are checked and are up to the same standards we expect of our Harlow licenced taxis, you said in the September meeting taking advice from the LGA document dated July 2021 this is something you would actively pursue, and what further work has been done to support Harlow's hard working taxi drivers?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Harlow Council has established a working relationship with City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) and has carried out several joint enforcement operations together in Harlow and will continue with this good work, interest in what we do has been expressed across other Essex Authorities on how we work together, as CWC Enforcement Officers have only visited Harlow and Chelmsford in Essex to date.

Joint enforcement of vehicles from neighbouring authorities is also progressing, an Essex Licensing Working Group has been set up to consider an Essex-wide authorisation and vehicles in Harlow licensed by other authorities will be actively checked.

Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:

How many joint operations have taken place and how many will take place?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I will write to you with specific details.