

To: Council

Date: 18 March 2024

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Title of Report: Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 1 of the agenda

1. Address from Mr. Bashir Ahmed, President of C. O. L. T. A (City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association)

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 1 of the agenda

1. **Address from Mr. Bashir Ahmed, President of C. O. L. T. A (City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association)**

Mr Bashir Ahmed was deputised by Mr Sajad Khan, Secretary of COLTA.

The secretary of our Association, Mr Sajad Khan, recently spoke at the general purpose licensing committee (GPLC) on 5th February 2024 highlighting the difficulties and the challenges our trade had endured since the onset of Covid back in 2020.

With the initial plan for the emission standard policy to begin in January 2025, after our secretary spoke at the GPLC meeting, Councillors agreed to allow a one-year delay to the emission standards policy, and for it to begin in January 2026. This 1 year delay was offered and approved as a compromise by both the Councillors and portfolio holders for Planning and healthier communities and Zero carbon/climate justice.

As a trade, we don't think the 1 year compromise was a balanced judgment of the facts available to all of us. The trade has lost 4 productive years since March 2020 since the initiation of Covid. There was no work for us for 18 months all the way through till the end of 2021. Then the trade suffered due to the unimaginable rise in living costs due to the financial crisis and very high interest rates. The trade was further impacted with industrial action which crippled the U.K. and still continues till this date. And lastly, the impact of road closures which includes LTNs and the ongoing closure of Botley Road have created a huge disruption to the service we are meant to provide. All of these issues impact taxi drivers and our earnings have reduced drastically.

Unfortunately, at the GPLC meeting, it seems like our concerns were largely ignored. We lost 4 productive years and in return a one year compromise was given. This is regrettable.

I hope that the members have had sight of and read the 2 important pieces of information available to them. I had sent all of you the relevant link to access these documents.

Firstly, the results of the public consultation where over 80% of the general public supported the delay of the emission standards policy till January 2028. Secondly, the 'Hackney carriage fleet Affordability' report presents to everyone findings which highlight our plight. To briefly summarise, it clearly states in there that under current circumstances, it is actually more viable to operate in the current TX4 diesel Cab than it is in the electric one because the cost associated with operating in an electric cab are greater. This includes the 200% increase in energy cost to charge the battery on the cab.

The report also highlights that in 2018, our trade was responsible for LESS THAN 1% of the harmful emissions within Oxford. We are now in 2024 and have 34 electric cabs operating out of 107. I ask the members, what do you think that would have done to the

1 % figure? That would have significantly reduced further. We are an insignificant number of road users which contribute a minuscule of emissions which hardly contribute to the environment. These reports seem to have been ignored.

To us, a fair compromise would have been an extra two years delay from 2025. We were hoping that the members at the GPLC would understand our concerns and appreciate the reports in front of them including the public consultation. On that basis, we were hoping that the emission standard policy would be delayed till January 2027. This would have been a compromise. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case.

I don't need to emphasise the point of our willingness and the corporation we've had with authorities that has got us to this stage. Thirty four (34) of our cabs are electric. This is due to the good relations we've had with the authority which included financial grants available to 20 proprietors who made use of the grant and purchased an electric cab.

No such grant is currently available to us. Unfortunately, what the GPLC had failed to realise in our opinion, is that the circumstances for the trade had changed drastically since 2020 with all the issues explained.

So we ask all of you to help the trade and support us drivers of the trade who are your constituents by delaying the emission standard policy by an extra year from 2026 to 2027. As I've explained, we have always been cooperative, but at times, a common

sense approach needs to be taken without ignoring the facts in front of you. Delaying the emission standards policy to 2027 will certainly give drivers who are faced with this daunting investment a bit more breathing space, drivers who can then plan their investment accordingly with the prospect of 2027 in their mind. Currently we are all paying very high prices in everything whether it's fuel food and bills, including Mortgages.

The expanded ZEZ is planned for sometime in 2026. Probably the middle of 2026. To ask for the emission standard policy to be delayed till January 2027 is not a big ask whatsoever in light of this development. This will give some proprietors a little bit more time to invest than others. Some proprietors will have their license renewals in early 2027. So we shouldn't consider delaying till 2027 as something which is criminal.

As I've said, it will certainly give the extra breathing space to all of us that have yet to change to electric cabs. Thank you to everyone for listening.

Thank you

Colta

Response from Councillor Edward Mundy, Chair of the General Purposes Licensing Committee

Thank you, Mr Ahmed and Mr Khan, for your services to the licensed taxi drivers of Oxford, and for addressing the Council today. As you know we are debating the Licensed Vehicles Emission Standards amendment later this evening, your comments will be taken into consideration by the Council.

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