

**QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED OF EXECUTIVE
COUNCILLORS AT THE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE
MEETING 6th APRIL 2005**

1. Question from Mr Veal

Has the Council made its decision with regard to deregulation within Bath & North East Somerset?

Answer by Executive Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins

No decision has yet been made. The Council Executive are considering these matters at this meeting today.

2. Question from Mr Veal

Has the Council consulted with the trade over this issue and, if so, how many operators were consulted?

Answer by Executive Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins

The Licensing department supplied a list of all Operators, drivers etc and all were consulted. Over 1000 letters consulting on the contents of this report were sent out on 10th March 2005. These included all Councillors, Parish Councils, Resident's Associations and Forums, the 2 Chambers of Commerce, Hackney Carriage Drivers, Private Hire Drivers and Taxi Proprietors. The reports of this consultation have been reported to this Executive meeting.

3. Question from Mr Veal

Are the Council going to issue more plates, over and above number 107, in zone one, before it has given its answer to Central Government on deregulation? If so, how many, when and under what conditions?

Answer by Executive Councillor Vic Pritchard

No Hackney Carriage plates will be issued or considered by the Regulatory (Licensing) Committee until after today's meeting of the Council Executive. The Council has a legal obligation to consider applications and, if the decision of the Executive is to retain the limit on numbers, the individual applications will be considered by the Regulatory (Licensing) Committee on their own merits, with the Executive Decision taken into consideration. Any conditions imposed would be individually tailored to the respective application. If the decision is to de-limit, then the licenses will be issued under delegated authority subject to any policy imposed by the Council Executive.

4. Question from Mr Veal

What are the reasons for the Council removing zones 1 & 2 within Bath & North East Somerset?

Answer by Executive Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins

The Council is not necessarily going to remove the zoning – although this is one of the matters being considered by the Executive.

5. Question from Mr Veal

Are the Council prepared to listen to what the trade is saying and will they understand that we do know what we are talking about, as it is our livelihoods that are at stake? Can we have assurances on this, here today and have it recorded in the minutes?

Answer by Executive Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins

This is the reason that the Taxi Liaison Group was set up in Bath and holds regular meetings. The value of the Liaison Groups, and the desire to improve, is also recognised in Objective 3 of the Taxi Policy.

6. Question from Mr Veal

Concerning plates 90 to 107, why did the Council not commission a survey to see if there was any unmet demand, BEFORE issuing these?

Answer by Executive Councillor Vic Pritchard

A survey of unmet public demand may be used by a local authority to justify its decision to limit the number of licenses issued. With the Executive aware of Government's demand that its policy be reviewed, any money spent on a survey before the Executive decision would be a waste of resources if the Executive decide to de-limit. If limitation is the policy, then a survey may (or may not!) support that policy. If the policy is to de-limit, a survey is irrelevant. The Council Executive will decide today whether or not this Council will continue to limit numbers. This decision will be taken in response to the Government's request for Councils that limit to justify their decision. It was right and proper that the applications be considered by the Councils Regulatory (Licensing) Committee and judged on their individual merits.

7. Question from Mr Veal

Why have the Council dragged its heels over the survey in 2004/05?

Answer by Executive Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins

The Council has not dragged its heels in any way on this matter.

8. Question from Mr Veal

When the last survey was commissioned, I believe in 1998 or 99, the trade were charged on the license fees for the total cost. The following year, the fees were not reduced by the amount of the survey and, in fact, rose by inflation plus 5%. It appears that we have, therefore, paid for that survey more than once. In fact, it appears that we were still paying for it in 2004, as our fees have never reduced. I ask the Council now when are we to have the overpayment refunded? (I should add here that I am prepared to have my solicitor look into this to check whether this was actually illegal).

Answer by Executive Councillor Vic Pritchard

The Trade were not specifically charged for the last survey, but did pay voluntarily for the previous survey in the early/mid 1990's. There has been no overpayment; licence fees reflect the cost of providing the taxi regulatory service. If a survey of unmet demand is to be carried out, then its cost would need to be reflected in future license fees.

9. Question from Councillor Colin Barrett

Following my recent presentation of a petition containing over 600 signatures supporting the removal of Weston Pinch Point, could the Executive Member tell the public what he now intends to do?

Answer by Executive Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins

I have received the petition. The pinch points have caused a number of traffic problems. It is important that the wider pavement that was put in is kept in place, that disabled parking provision is maintained and that there will be facilities for other residents to park their vehicles in the immediate area. My intention is, subject to meeting the above needs, that the pinch points shall be removed.