

**IMPACT OF PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT WORKS IN UNICORN HILL
AND CHURCH GREEN WEST ON THE TAXI RANK AT UNICORN HILL**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor L Harrison
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Wilkes – Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Public realm improvements works are due to begin in Summer 2024 in Unicorn Hill and Church Green West in Redditch.
- 1.2 These planned works will have an impact on the existing hackney carriage stand (taxi rank) located in Unicorn Hill.
- 1.3 The Licensing Committee are asked to note the impact on the hackney carriage stand and to direct officers to carry out the advertising process required to enable the revocation and making of Hackney Carriage Stand Orders so that these are consistent with the way Unicorn Hill will be laid out after the public realm improvement works have been completed.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Licensing Committee RESOLVE to direct officers to carry out the advertising process required in order for the Council to be able to revoke the existing Hackney Carriage Stand Orders and make new Hackney Carriage Stand Orders in respect of Unicorn Hill so that these are consistent with the layout of the highway once the public realm improvement works in Church Green West and Unicorn Hill have been completed.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The cost of the public notice and other administrative costs will be met from existing budgets held by Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

- 3.2 The costs of providing the required signage and road markings will be met from the budgets agreed in respect of the public realm improvements works in Church Green West and Unicorn Hill.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 Licensing Authorities have power under Section 63 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to create, amend and revoke hackney carriage stands (ranks). This allows district councils to “appoint stands for Hackney Carriages” either on public highways or private land and the stands can be for either continual or part-time use.
- 3.4 Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s63 a district council is required to publish a notice in a local newspaper and wait 28 days from publication, after which Members will need to consider any written representations of objections made.
- 3.5 Before appointing any stand for hackney carriages or varying the number of hackney carriages to be at each stand a district council is required to give notice to the chief officer of police.
- 3.6 Additionally a district council cannot create a hackney carriage stand:
- (a) so as unreasonably to prevent access to any premises;
 - (b) so as to impede the use of any points authorised to be used in connection with a local service within the meaning of the Transport Act 1985 or PSV operator’s licence granted under the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981, as points for the taking up or setting down of passengers, or in such a position as to interfere unreasonably with access to any station or depot of any passenger road transport operators, except with the consent of those operators;
 - (c) on any highway except with the consent of the highway authority; the maximum number of permissible points has been reached, is taken at the appropriate level, based on the merits of each individual case.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.7 In 2021 the Redditch Town Deal Board secured £15.6million pounds worth of funding from the Government's Towns Fund to deliver a range of town centre regeneration proposals.
- 3.8 One of the proposals that this funding will deliver is improvements to the public realm in Church Green West, Unicorn Hill and St Stephen's Churchyard.
- 3.9 Redditch Borough Council is working in partnership with Worcestershire County Council on improving the public space. It will be the third phase of public space improvements for the town centre following-on from works on Alcester Street and Market Place and will be designed to tie in with plans to develop Redditch Railway Station. Works are currently scheduled to begin in Summer 2024, with preparatory works already underway.
- 3.10 Licensing Officers have been notified that the public realm in Unicorn Hill has been redesigned and an amended layout is being implemented that involves changes being made to the existing Hackney Carriage Stand (taxi rank) that is located on Unicorn Hill.
- 3.11 The design for the new layout of Unicorn Hill is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.12 Currently there is a Hackney Carriage Stand on the south side Unicorn Hill that operates 24 hours a day and runs for around 85 metres along Unicorn Hill, providing space for around 17 hackney carriages to stand and ply for hire.
- 3.13 It has been suggested on a number of occasions in recent years that the current parking arrangements in Unicorn Hill are not satisfactory. It has been suggested that there is no need (during daytime hours) for the taxi rank to be so large.
- 3.14 Retailers in Unicorn Hill have often called for changes to be made to provide space for their customers to park close to their premises for a short period of time to help boost footfall and increase the viability of their businesses.
- 3.15 It must also be recognised that licensed hackney carriage drivers regularly report issues with members of the public and delivery drivers parking their vehicles on the taxi rank during the day and into the evenings. This issue is likely to be down, in part, to the lack of available space for people to park nearby when they want or need to visit the business premises on Unicorn Hill.

- 3.16 In the layout being implemented, a smaller full-time rank is retained towards the bottom of Unicorn Hill. This taxi rank would provide 36 metres of space that would allow for approximately seven hackney carriages to stand and ply for hire 24 hours a day.
- 3.17 Behind this taxi rank there will be a further bay that will operate as a part-time taxi rank. The bay will provide 36 metres of space that would accommodate approximately seven vehicles.
- 3.18 Between 8am and 6pm (Monday to Saturday) this bay would be available for short term parking by members of the public (up to 45 minutes, no return within two hours). Between 6pm and 8am (Monday to Saturday) the bay will revert to use as a taxi rank only. This bay will not be subject to any restrictions between 8am on a Sunday and 8am the following day (Monday).
- 3.19 Behind this part-time rank, there will be a parking bay for use by disabled badge holders that will be 13 metres in length and accommodate two vehicles with rear wheelchair access.
- 3.20 Finally at the top of Unicorn Hill there will be a bay for Goods Vehicle loading which will be 30 metres in length.
- 3.21 In order to implement the new layout that has been designed there are two separate but connected legal processes that need to be carried out. Worcestershire County Council will need to carry out the legal processes involved in amending / creating the relevant Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in respect of Unicorn Hill.
- 3.22 Alongside that process, it is also necessary for Redditch Borough Council to undertake the required legal processes to appoint new hackney carriage stands and revoke the appointment of the existing hackney carriage stand at this location.
- 3.23 The first stage of this process is for the district Council to consult on the proposals with the chief officer of police and to publish a public notice in a local newspaper. Then a period of at least 28 days must be provided to allow for any written representations or objections to be made to the proposals.
- 3.24 Members are asked to instruct officers to carry out the required consultation with any written representations or objections received being brought back for consideration at a future meeting of the Licensing Committee.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Failure to carry out the legal process to appoint new hackney carriage stands in Unicorn Hill would mean that when the public realm improvement works are complete, the Council's Hackney Carriage Stand Orders would be inconsistent with both the Traffic Regulation Orders and the layout of the highway in Unicorn Hill.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Drawing of Proposed Layout

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Dave Etheridge – Principal Officer (Licensing)
Worcestershire Regulatory Services

E Mail: dave.etheridge@worcsregservices.gov.uk

Tel: (01905) 822799