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## Chelmsford City Council Regulatory Committee

23rd January 2025

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### Beaulieu Park Train Station - Taxi Rank Permit Scheme

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**Report by:**

Director of Public Places

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**Officer Contact:**

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**Purpose**

To consider the introduction of a Taxi Rank Permit Scheme at Beaulieu Park Station.

**Recommendations**

To agree that a consultation is carried out on the proposed Taxi Rank Permit Scheme to obtain views and feedback on the proposals.

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### 1. Background

- 1.1. Chelmsford City Council own the area of land allocated for the new Station Taxi Rank at Beaulieu Park Train Station and can manage the rank accordingly. It has been agreed in principle that the use of the taxi rank by Hackney Carriage drivers/vehicles be chargeable. Only those taxis who are 'permitted' by the Council would be allowed to use the rank.
- 1.2. There appear to be very few situations nationally where a local authority and a railway company have a collaborative or joint-owned interest in station land. The Council have limited examples to call on and have therefore looked at how

taxi services are provided at out-of-town railway stations that appear to serve a similar demographic to Chelmsford. In particular, Aylesbury Vale Parkway and Haddenham and Thame Parkway. The car parking and associated services at these stations, however, are on entirely railway-owned land and the services from the stations are slightly different to those proposed at Beaulieu Park in terms of passenger numbers.

- 1.3. With regards London Commuter traffic, the draft timetable shows the number of trains stopping at Beaulieu Park's London-bound platform in peak morning times will be between 3 and 4 per hour and Norwich-bound there will be 3 and 4 trains per hour in peak evening time. Off peak and weekends there will be 2 trains per hour each direction. The annual footfall is predicted at between 290,000 and 390,000 in the first year of opening, growing fairly quickly as the station establishes itself and levelling out at a figure around double the initial number by 2029. For information, the total annual number of passengers going through Chelmsford station in 2023-2024 was 6,538,092.

## 2. Proposals

- 2.1. In order to manage the number of taxis accessing the rank and finding a balance between the throughput needed to accommodate passengers' needs and prevent clogging of routes leading to the taxi rank, a specific number of permits to be issued is recommended.
- 2.2. The number of permits will need to be subject to regular review against demand. In order to manage access to the rank in the first months, it is proposed to issue permits in batches in the first year. Initially issuing up to 50 permits in the first year seems a proportionate approach. These could be issued as an initial batch of 15 to 35. The total number of permits can be assessed and increased in-year as necessary, monitoring the flow of passengers at peak times as well as driver, passenger and station feedback.
- 2.3. The demand for ranked taxis tends to be self-limiting with passengers finding alternative means if the rank is empty by, for example, ordering a private hire vehicle. This would be detrimental in terms of traffic management at drop-off/pick up areas if there are insufficient taxis or the wait time is too long at peak times.
- 2.4. The permits and access to the rank will be limited to hackney carriage vehicles licensed by Chelmsford City Council. The permit should be physically attached to the vehicle and linked to the registration number in order to avoid an unauthorised trade in the permits. The Council will carefully monitor the effect of the Beaulieu Park station on the taxi provision at the city centre station. The Council may be able to consider not issuing a permit to hackney carriages that already have a permit to use the Chelmsford Rank (this is a private arrangement between drivers and Greater Anglia). It is likely that there will be

Chelmsford City Council/SEPP representatives working from the new station involved in managing the CCC Car Park on site. These members of staff could also assist in the checking of taxi permits to those on the station rank if needed.

- 2.5. Investigations have identified an annual rank permit for a small to medium station can be charged at anywhere between £300-£700 and permits at busy commuter stations costing well over £1,000. We are not privy to the financial arrangements in place between Chelmsford Station and the drivers who use the Chelmsford station rank but if the charges for permits are not compatible there may be a detrimental effect on provision in the city centre (or vice versa). However, in the initial year, Beaulieu Park station's popularity will be an unknown quantity and setting a definitive permit charge is therefore not straightforward. The permit price could be set at between approximately £500 to £1500.
- 2.6. It is important that taxis actually use the rank and provide the service that is expected. Permit holders should be encouraged to prioritise the Beaulieu Park Station rank at peak times and conditions associated with the permit could include the cooperating with the Council in monitoring demand and providing feedback.
- 2.7. The permit scheme will be reviewed after one year (or earlier if it is apparent that there are significant issues arising), and thereafter on an ongoing basis, to measure demand, assess operations, and to give the opportunity for passenger numbers and usage to level out. If necessary, changes can then be made to the scheme in terms of number of permits and related charges.
- 2.8. The Beaulieu Park station rank is provided on Chelmsford City Council land and access to it is an arrangement that falls outside the statutory regulation of taxi and driver licences. In essence, the Council in its capacity as landowner (rather than as a taxi regulator) would be granting a licence ('permit') in respect of individual hackney carriage vehicles to access/use the land as taxi rank. Although there will need to be liaison to verify the licensed status of the driver and vehicle, the permit scheme will be implemented and managed outside of the Council's Licensing Team. Income from the permit scheme is separate from any charges associated with regulatory licensing and must be kept so. The charge for permits should however, cover the cost of its introduction and management.

### 3. Consultation

- 3.1. The outline of the proposal detailed above will be included in the consultation and will request comments from relevant stakeholders.
- 3.2. These proposals can be summarised as an initial batch of permits available to be 15-35, out of a possible annual 50 permits, and priced within the range of £500- £1500 for a year. Applications will be reviewed with possible priority

given to those vehicles with disabled access, and also to electric vehicles. Physical permits to be issued to taxis permitted to use the rank.

- 3.3. The consultees will include all taxi operators and drivers within the Chelmsford City Council area as well as other interested parties including Greater Anglia, Essex Highways, SEPP. The consultation will be open for 6 weeks and would be advertised on the City Council website.

#### 4. Conclusion

- 4.1. It is recommended that Members agree to officers undertake a consultation on the Taxi Rank Permit Scheme
- 4.2. Once consultation responses have been received, they will be brought back to Regulatory Committee for members to consider.
- 4.3. The report and recommendations of the Committee will then be referred to Cabinet for a formal decision.

#### List of appendices:

None

#### Background papers:

None

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#### Corporate Implications

##### Legal/Constitutional:

None

##### Financial:

The scheme, if approved, will provide income to Chelmsford City Council.

##### Potential impact on climate change and the environment:

None

##### Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030:

None

##### Personnel:

None

Risk Management:

None

Equality and Diversity:

Impact Assessment not required.

Health and Safety:

None

Digital:

None

Other:

None

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Consultees:

N/A

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Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None

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