

FOR PUBLICATION

REVIEW OF THE LIMIT SET ON THE NUMBER OF HACKNEY CARRIAGES (A410)

MEETING: APPEALS AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

DATE: 11 December 2019

REPORT BY: LICENSING MANAGER

WARD: ALL

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To advise the Committee of the results from the latest Hackney Carriage Unmet Demand Survey carried out in 2019 so a decision can be made on future policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 In December 2010 members decided to limit the number of Hackney Carriages licensed by the Council to 110. At that time there were 183 vehicles licensed as hackney carriages, a figure that had reduced to 158 in 2013, 150 in 2016 and now stands at 145.

2.2 Further unmet demand surveys took place in both 2013 and 2016, each paid for by the holders of Hackney Carriage licences, and in each case the limit on numbers was continued at 110.

2.3 Another survey has now been completed, and the full report is attached at Appendix A.

2.4 The author of the report, Mr Iain Macdonald, has been invited to attend the meeting and give a presentation on his findings.

- 2.5 The ability to limit the number of Hackney Carriages is provided by the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and section 16 of the Transport Act 1985, and is conditional. The regulatory authority must be satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages which is unmet.
- 2.6 The Department for Transport has developed a guidance documentation entitled 'Taxi and Private hire licensing: Best Guidance (2010)'. This guidance addresses a wide range of licensing considerations and issues and provides recommendations on good practice. Within the guidance it is recommended that if a licensing authority should seek to retain a quantity restriction, then a survey should be carried out to establish if there is any unmet demand for Hackney Carriages.
- 2.7 If the result of an unmet demand survey should demonstrate that there is evidence of significant unmet demand, the recommended actions for a licensing authority may be to either raise the limit on Hackney Carriage numbers to an appropriate level, or to remove the limit altogether.
- 2.8 If the result of an unmet demand survey should demonstrate that there is no evidence of unmet demand, then a third choice of action becomes available to the licensing authority, which is to keep the cap in place at the same level.
- 2.9 A licensing authority may choose at any time, to raise or remove a limit on Hackney Carriage numbers, but in order to retain or impose a limit good practice guidance suggests that an unmet demand survey is required and that the result shows that there is no evidence of unmet demand.

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 The 2019 survey concludes there is no evidence of significant unmet demand for the services of Hackney Carriages in the Chesterfield Borough Council area.

- 3.2 Public consultation concluded that the hackney fleet in Chesterfield is generally well regarded with few issues concerning availability and the service provided.
- 3.3 The trend for hackney drivers to also operate under a private hire booking system has continued, meaning they can maximise their availability.
- 3.4 Drivers who operate from the railway station rank tend to be solo operators or working within small operator companies. As such, the proportion of hackney carriages which leave the railway station rank empty (to fulfil a booking) is relatively low compared to other ranks.
- 3.5 A significant proportion, 26%, of hackney carriages left the ranks empty.
- 3.6 The importance of the private railway station rank is highlighted several times within the report, with 53% of passenger demand for all hackneys. In 2016 it was 57%.
- 3.7 The average time for each passenger to wait for a taxi to arrive at a rank was 6 minutes 26 seconds; the average time for all passengers, including those who didn't have to wait, was 17 seconds.
- 3.8 The author's conclusion is that there is an adequate supply of hackney carriages and, based on the number of vehicles licensed as hackney carriages at the present time, no additional licences would be necessary to cater for foreseeable growth in general demand over the next three years.
- 3.9 The low proportion of hackneys observed working from the town centre ranks suggests there is capacity within the fleet to deal with any moderate rise in demand.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The evidence gathered suggests there is no significant unmet demand.
- 4.2 Based on the number of vehicles licensed as hackney carriages at the time of the survey (145) there is no need to increase the number of hackney carriage licences at the present time.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Committee has a number of options available.
- 5.2 Option 1: retain the limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles at 110.
- 5.3 Option 2: remove the limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles.
- 5.4 Option 3: increase the limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles.
- 5.5 If option 1 or 3 is chosen, then officers be authorised to commission a further unmet demand survey in 2022 to review the policy. The survey should be funded by the holders of Hackney Carriage licences, at present the estimate for this would be £20 per year for three years.

Further information on this report can be obtained from Trevor Durham, Licensing Manager, on 01246 345203 or Trevor.durham@chesterfield.gov.uk.