

REVIEW OF THE LIMIT SET ON THE NUMBER OF HACKNEY CARRIAGES

MEETING: APPEALS AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

DATE: 8 FEBRUARY 2023

REPORT BY: LICENSING MANAGER

WARD: ALL

COMMUNITY FORUM: 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 2022 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, 145 in 2019 and now stands at 138.

2.2 Further unmet demand surveys took place in 2013, 2016 and 2019, 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, the executive summary of which is attached at Appendix A with the full report at Appendix B.

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 document entitled 'Taxi and Private hire licensing: Best Guidance (2010)'. This document 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 a 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 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 2022 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 The busiest rank was the railway station, with approximately 50% of observed hires occurring there.
- 3.5 When we compare the 2022 results with the 2019 survey, we see the number of all hires from Thursday morning to Sunday morning has decreased by 28%.
- 3.6 Approximately 13% of hackney carriages left the rank empty. It may be that many of these empty departures had been responding to telephone bookings. Hackneys which leave the rank early have the effect of reducing the average waiting time observed.
- 3.7 Occasions where passengers had to wait for a hackney carriage to arrive at a rank were generally isolated events rather than lengthy continuous periods of waiting.
- 3.8 Public consultation took place via an online questionnaire. Stakeholder consultation was undertaken with minority group representatives, local businesses, hotels, licensed premises, the police and transport providers.
- 3.9 The consultation feedback indicated that:
 - a) There were few issues from stakeholders regarding the availability of hackney carriages.
 - b) Some hackney drivers obtain a significant proportion of their income through pre-booked fares, in addition to hires from ranks.
 - c) Trade feedback focused on
 - i. The number of out of area licensed vehicles working in the area.
 - ii. The ageing driver workforce with potential for problems in future years.
 - iii. Complaints about the length of time it took to licence a new driver.
 - iv. Allegations that some drivers don't always use the meter, they refuse short distance fares during quiet periods and contrive to refuse wheelchair hires at the ranks.

- 3.10 Public consultation, and consultation with elderly and disability representatives, did not highlight any concerns with these issues.
- 3.11 Test purchase operations, and regular enforcement patrols have taken place and found no evidence of short fares or wheelchair users being refused.
- 3.12 The proportion of the hackney fleet that operated from the ranks is relatively low, and the level of demand from ranks is not sufficient to sustain the hackney fleet on its own.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 There is currently an adequate supply of hackney carriages. No additional licences would be necessary to cater for foreseeable growth in general demand over the next three years.
- 4.2 The low proportion of the hackney carriage fleet observed working from the ranks suggests there is capacity within the fleet to deal with any moderate rise in demand.
- 4.3 The evidence gathered suggests there is no significant unmet demand for hackney carriages.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The committee has several options available.
- 5.2 Option 1: retain the limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles at 110.
- 5.3 Option 2: increase the limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles.
- 5.4 Option 3: remove the limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicles.
- 5.5 If option 1 or 2 is chosen, then officers be authorised to commission a further unmet demand survey in 2025 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.

APPENDIX A