

To: General Purposes Licensing Committee

Date: 14th June 2010

Item No:

Report of: Head of Environmental Development

Title of Report: Hackney Carriage Unmet Demand Survey

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To consider the report (attached as Appendix Two) of the unmet demand survey that was carried out between October and December 2009.

Report Approved by:

Finance: Gillian Chandler

Legal: Daniel Smith

Policy Framework: Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life.

Recommendation(s):

Committee is recommended to:

- (i) agree to accept the conclusions of the Hackney Carriage Demand Survey Report prepared by Halcrow Group Limited, that there is currently no significant unmet demand for hackney carriages,
- (ii) agree to advise Council that, having considered the report of the Halcrow Group Limited, the Committee is satisfied that there is currently no significant unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages and to RECOMMENDED Council resolves to maintain the Council's policy of quantity control on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences, and
- (iii) agree that a further demand survey should be commissioned in 2012.

Background

1. The Town Police Clauses Act 1847, section 37 and the Transport Act 1985, section 16 allow a licensing authority to limit the number of hackney carriages as long as they are 'satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages which is unmet'.
2. Oxford City Council has a policy to limit the number of hackney carriage licences to a level that meets but does not exceed demand for the services of hackney carriages. It checks this limit by periodic surveys. The policy forms part of the Council's Policy Framework. It can only be changed with Council's agreement. The only change that can be made is to abandon the policy
3. A full review of hackney carriage licensing was carried out by the Environmental Scrutiny Committee in 2007. A report went before that committee on the 12th November 2007 and decisions upon the review were reached by full Council on 30th June 2008. The Council's resolution is attached as Appendix One.
4. At the General Purposes Licensing Committee on the 28th October 2008 it was agreed to note the Council resolution of the 30th June 2008 to continue with the regulated number of hackney carriage licenses and request officers to commission a new unmet demand survey to determine if there is a significant unmet demand for hackney carriages.

Hackney Carriage Demand Survey 2009

5. The Head of Environmental Development invited tenders for a survey to be carried out and the Halcrow Group Limited was appointed. The survey was carried out in October and December 2009.
6. Halcrow Group Limited has produced a report with their conclusions regarding the survey. The report is 37 pages long and therefore only the Summary and Conclusions are attached to this report at Appendix Two. There will be 2 copies of the full report in the members lounge and if a member would like the report sent electronically please contact Jill Cramer on the e-mail address at the bottom of this report.
7. The conclusion of the survey was:-

'The 2009 study has identified that there is NO evidence of significant unmet demand for hackney carriages in Oxford. This conclusion is based on an assessment of the implications of case law that has emerged since 2000, and the results of Halcrow's analysis.'
8. A consultant from Halcrow Group Limited will be at the meeting to present the report to the committee.

Other Matters

9. When full Council considered the motion relating to the policy of Hackney Carriage numbers in June 2008 it also agreed that the following should be considered:-
- *driver safety* – council officers and officers from Thames Valley Police are looking into the different types of CCTV that are currently on the market with a view to having them installed in all licensed vehicles.
 - *taxi marshals* – a trial was carried out by Home Office through NightSafe at the end of March 2010. Officers are waiting for a debrief of the trial and if any further funding would be available.
 - *fee structure* - this is currently being reviewed by the Finance Section, Taxi Licensing is self financing and the licence fees have to be set to cover all costs.
 - *consideration should be given to how the system can best ensure all taxis over time meet accessibility and fuel efficiency standards* – all hackney carriages are wheelchair accessible. On the 15th June 2009 the General Purposes Licensing Committee agreed a new criteria for all licensed vehicles to ensure that by 2011 all vehicles emissions meet Euro 3 standard and by 2013 all vehicles will emissions will meet Euro 4 standard.
 - *ensure that this survey involves open consultation with taxi drivers and users* – Appendix 5 of the full survey report shows who Halcrow consulted when carrying out the survey. (If you wish to see a full copy of the report paragraph 6 explains how you can get a copy).
 - *that any further surveys are seen to be independent by funding them out of hackney cab licensing fees* - the Finance Section is currently looking at the licence fees and officers will ensure that this is taken into account.
10. Committee is recommended to:
- (i) agree to accept the conclusions of the Hackney Carriage Demand Survey Report prepared by Halcrow Group Limited, that there is currently no significant unmet demand for hackney carriages,
 - (ii) agree to advise Council that, having considered the report of the Halcrow Group Limited, the Committee is satisfied that there is currently no significant unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages and to RECOMMENDED Council resolves to maintain the

Council's policy of quantity control on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences, and

(iii) agree that a further demand survey should be commissioned in 2012.

Name and contact details of author:

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Background papers:

Appendix One : Minutes of the Councils resolution 30th June 2008

Appendix Two : Conclusion of the unmet demand survey

Appendix One

Resolution from Full Council Meeting 30th June 2008

Amended recommendation 3 – expand the remit of next year's planned demand survey to include consideration of the broader issues underpinning the shortage of cabs at certain times (for example driver safety, working of taxi ranks, taxi marshals, fee structure). In addition, consideration should be given to how the system can best ensure all taxis over time meet accessibility and fuel efficiency standards. Ensure that this survey involves open consultation with taxi drivers and users and that it is seen to be independent by funding it out of hackney cab licensing fees – which would be increased accordingly at next year's budget. It would be commissioned as now by the City Council.

Appendix Two

9. Summary and Conclusions

9.1 **Introduction**

9.1.1 Halcrow has conducted a study of the hackney carriage market on behalf of Oxford City Council.

9.1.2 The present study has been conducted in pursuit of the following objectives:

- to identify whether or not there exists a significant unmet demand for hackney carriage services in Oxford;
- to recommend the increase in licences required to eliminate any significant unmet demand.

9.1.3 This section provides a brief description of the work undertaken and summarises the conclusions and implications for regulatory policy.

9.2 **Significant Unmet Demand**

9.2.1 The 2009 study has identified that there is NO evidence of significant unmet demand for hackney carriages in Oxford. This conclusion is based on an assessment of the implications of case law that has emerged since 2000, and the results of Halcrow's analysis.

9.2.2 On this basis the authority has discretion in its hackney licensing policy and may either:

- continue to limit the number of vehicles at 107;
- issue any number of additional plates as it sees fit, either in one allocation or a series of allocations; or
- remove the limit on the number of vehicles and allow a free entry policy.

9.3 **Consultation – Interested Parties**

9.3.1 The Department for Transport had requested that licensing authorities consult widely to inform their policy making in respect of continued entry control to the hackney carriage market. In addition to the consultation that has routinely been included in previous market studies (correspondence with interested parties), Halcrow has followed the prescribed approach and sought the views of all those involved in the taxi trade. We have also widened the scope of the consultation by correspondence to include other transport operators.

9.3.2 A number of stakeholders felt that there is a need for more wheelchair accessible taxis in Oxford. It was also felt that driver quality should be improved in Oxford which could be achieved through additional training. Also, it was felt that more advertising is needed of rank locations as they can be hard to find.

9.4 **Consultation – General Public**

9.4.1 The key results from the Public Attitude Survey can be summarised as follows:

- Some 51.1% of respondents in Oxford had used a taxi in the last 3 months;
- Almost three quarters of hirings were achieved by telephone (52.5%) with 28.2% of trip makers stated that they hired their taxi at a rank.
- High levels of satisfaction with delay on last trip;
- Majority of respondents had not given up waiting for a taxi in the last three months with 20.9% stating they had given up trying to obtain a vehicle by rank and/or flagdown in Oxford;
- Majority of respondents felt safe using taxis during the day and night in Oxford.

9.5 **Conclusion**

9.5.1 The 2009 study has identified that there is NO evidence of significant unmet demand for hackney carriages in Oxford. This conclusion is based on an assessment of the implications of case law that has emerged since 2000, and the results of Halcrow's analysis.

9.5.2 On this basis the authority has discretion in its hackney licensing policy and may either:

- continue to limit the number of vehicles at 107;
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