

**TO: LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
10 OCTOBER 2013**

**HACKNEY CARRIAGE SURCHARGE
Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Further to previous reports, this paper details a proposed way forward in respect of discussion about amendments to the tariff of fares charged by hackney carriages.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Given the views expressed during the consultation process, officers are keen to continue dialogue with the trade and other stakeholders including members of the public before presenting a more complete response to this Committee. It is proposed that officers look into the possibility of setting up a joint working group. The intention would be to involve representatives from the trade, meter company representatives and members of the public. Officers will then look to bring a report to a future meeting on the results of the working group.
- 2.2 This surcharge was introduced by the Council following the introduction of the Accessible Taxi Policy requiring the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles was agreed in 2000. As part of the consultation process with the trade it was recognised that the vehicles available to hackney carriage owners which would meet the required policy were London-style taxis or the large MPV conversions which were significantly more expensive to purchase, run and maintain than many of the saloon vehicles licensed at that time.
- 2.3 Over the last 10 years the type and variety of wheelchair accessible vehicles has rapidly grown such that much cheaper vehicles with costs in line with saloon vehicles are now available. The need to purchase a more expensive 5+ seater vehicle to meet the accessibility criteria no longer exists. If such vehicles are purchased it is a matter of choice for the owner, not a compulsion. The trend to the smaller vehicle such as the Fiat Doblo or Peugeot Partner means that now there are only 31 large vehicle variants such as the VW Shuttle licensed as hackney carriages from a total fleet of 86. By 2015 this figure may, dependent upon owner choice, reduce further to 14 as vehicles reach their age limit and require replacement.
- 2.4 The present arrangements for calculating the surcharge is confusing for customers and open to fraudulent use. Many attempts have been made to find a way to present the charge in a way that is clear for customers but given the limitations of the meters fitted to the vehicles this has not been possible. We have received many complaints from both customers and the trade itself around incidents of conflict when the meter price rises by 50% at the end of the journey. The proposed recommendation would show, for say a journey carrying 7 passengers, 3 extra charges applied at the start of the journey and included in the running total on the meter. This would be clear to the customers as the price can be seen to be increasing as the journey progresses with no sudden, unexpected or questionable increase at the conclusion of the journey

Unrestricted

- 2.5 Responses to the consultation process which was carried out between January and the 15 March and 24 responses were received. There were 2 responses from members of the public who supported the removal of the surcharge, and 1 who supported the retention of the surcharge. The 21 responses from members of the trade were against the removal of the surcharge as they argued that this would make such vehicles economically unviable.
- 2.6 It should be noted that hackney carriages are not the only suppliers of vehicles available to carry more than four passengers. Presently Bracknell Forest has 182 licensed private hire vehicles, of which 51 are able to carry five or more passengers.

Background Papers

None

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