

**TO: LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
9 OCTOBER 2014**

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

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Further to previous reports, this paper provides an update in respect of work undertaken to consider amendments to the surcharge tariff charged by drivers of the larger hackney carriages licensed by the Council.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The surcharge was introduced in 2000 as part of the introduction of the Accessible Taxi Policy requiring the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles. The consultation process highlighted that the vehicles available to meet the policy requirements were London-style taxis or the large MPV conversions. Such vehicles were significantly more expensive to purchase, run and maintain than many of the saloon vehicles licensed at that time.
- 2.2 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 now 31 large vehicle 'variants' licensed as hackney carriages from a total fleet of 84. By 2015 this figure may, dependent upon owner choice, reduce further to 14 as such vehicles reach their age limit and require replacement.
- 2.3 The present arrangements for calculating the surcharge can be 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 complaints from both customers and the trade around incidents of conflict when the meter price as shown is increased by 50% at the end of the journey.
- 2.4 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 211 licensed private hire vehicles, of which 63 are able to carry five or more passengers.
- 2.5 There were 24 responses to the consultation process carried out between January and the 15 March. 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 the larger vehicles economically unviable.
- 2.6 Given the views expressed during the consultation process, officers set up a working group with members of the trade and representatives of meter companies. A meeting was held as agreed and alternative options were put forward for consideration.

Unrestricted

- 2.7 No further action has been taken since to progress this issue either way as officers were made aware of another local authority looking to make similar amendments to their hackney carriage tariff. It is understood that the authority is currently subject to challenge. Accordingly, officers have put the work on hold pending the results of that challenge, as there may be useful learning that can be picked up as a result of that process

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

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