

**Report of the Service Director to the
General Licensing Regulatory Board
to be held on the 24 October 2018**

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report, is to provide Members with an update in relation to the taxi demand survey.

2. Background

Members are minded to note that The Licensing Officer provided a report in December 2017 giving information on issues raised from the results of the last taxi demand survey into whether there was an unmet demand for Hackney Carriages in the Borough. As a result it was resolved that that further update reports on progress be submitted throughout the year.

The Board are reminded that the Council has retained a limit on the number of hackney cabs since its inception in 1974. There were currently 67 hackneys within the Borough but in order to retain a limit, the Council is required to undertake a survey into unmet demand on a regular basis. Such a survey had been undertaken earlier in the year which indicated the somewhat complex findings and these were summarised within the report.

The findings indicated, amongst other things, that

- there was a highly significant unmet demand mainly in the early hours of the morning at weekends when only 58% of the available hackney cabs were working. There was a problem getting drivers to work during the busiest late night/early morning and whilst this was recognised by the trade, many drivers did not want to work at these times citing safety issues and family commitments

- 87% of the respondents to the driver survey supported retaining the cap on the number of vehicles as this meant that drivers were known to the travelling public, fareshare was kept low and vehicles were maintained to a high standard and pollution and congestion were kept under control
- Customer satisfaction was high despite waiting times at busy periods and customers appeared to accept the need to wait
- Taxi marshals were seen as a positive and improved the safety of both drivers and the public
- Whilst there had been a reduction in the number of drivers, this had been offset by the move to the issuing of dual licences, however, there was a shortage of private hire vehicles at peak times which was increasing the pressure on other private hire vehicles and hackney carriage vehicles
- The trade saw the entry requirements for new drivers as being too onerous although the Licensing Service considered that these requirements were necessary to ensure that all drivers were seen to be fit and proper and were suitably trained

It was noted in the report that there appeared to be a lack of vehicles working at unsociable hours, however, any increase in the number of vehicles would not guarantee additional vehicles being available at peak times and, in addition, there was no legal way of ensuring that vehicles worked at times of high demand.

3. Current Position

Update

Since the receipt of the report the Council has worked closely with the trade to try to resolve these issues. Officers had already held meetings with the Taxi Liaison Group and with representatives of the trade where discussions had focused on the need to encourage drivers to work during the unsociable hours and on the recruitment of new drivers who might be willing to work at such times. The trade saw the entry requirements for new drivers as being too onerous and so as a result Licensing Officers have made available a theory

test guidance document to help, educate and support new applicants into the trade.

It was also stated in the report that a further survey would be completed within twelve months to assess the situation and confirm if the lack of available drivers at peak times had increased.

Based on the findings of the review, a decision will then be made as to whether the limit should remain or if there should be an increase in the number of licensed hackney cabs or, alternatively, whether the cap should be lifted completely.

As planned the review will take place before the end of the year.

4. Background Papers

Enforcement Officer Reports which contain exempt information are not available for public inspection

6. Officer Contact

Debbie Bailey

X 5696