

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director People and Places	Licensing and Public Safety Committee	March 2010

## TAXI UNMET DEMAND SURVEY

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To advise Members of the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Taxi Unmet Demand Survey undertaken in November 2008.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

- It is recommended that:
  - The current number of hackney plate licenses be maintained at 37.
  - The Council reviews its hackney taxi rank provision with regard to disability access issues and locations.
  - The Council implements a scheme to encourage appropriate driver training in customer care through the taxi driver licence regime.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- In November 2008 the Council commissioned a survey to study the use and demand on the hackney taxi service provided in Chorley through the Councils licensing regime. The report was received in late 2008 and the Licensing Team at that time determined to await the results of Government report on the application of the DDA to hackney provision which was due mid 2009.
- In the event the Government study and consultation on DDA and Hackneys was delayed and a report was only published by The Department for Transport in August 2009. The conclusions of that consultation have not resulted to date in any prescribed changes to hackney provision and Members should now consider the Unmet Demand Survey results.

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

#### (If the recommendations are accepted)

- To ensure the Council acts on the recommendations arising from the Taxi Unmet Demand Survey.

### ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- None

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
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Central Lancashire sub-region			
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	√
Involving people in their communities		Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	√

## BACKGROUND

8. The Taxi Unmet Demand Survey was undertaken in November 2008 and the full 107 page report can be viewed on the Loop at <http://theloop/section.asp?catid=12252&docid=21042>
9. The conclusions and recommendations are reproduced below in italics:

### Key Conclusions

- *On the basis of the analyses conducted we conclude that significant unmet demand for Hackney Carriages in Chorley Borough **does not exist** at this time.*
- *In general availability and responsiveness was confirmed as satisfactory by the rank observations, on street surveys and consultation undertaken. The overall supply of taxis seems to be adequate with 1 per 630 people in the Borough, although the Hackneys per capita (1:2756) is somewhat above average compared to the 100 other authorities cited (1:1669).*
- *While there is no significant unmet demand identified, based on the consultation undertaken there are some who require a wheelchair accessible vehicle that sometimes encounter difficulties obtaining these, in particular at peak times. This implies there may be some latent demand for such vehicles, although the scale of this demand appears to be relatively small. No wheelchair users were observed waiting for a Hackney at ranks.*
- *Both Hackneys and PHVs are most likely to be used for leisure trips and to a lesser extent for shopping. PHV's are also commonly used to access health facilities and work/education while Hackneys are less likely to be used for this purpose. There were 33% of on street survey respondents who said they had never used a taxi.*
- *Overall the majority consider they obtain value for money for the fare they pay taxi operators. The average cost of a one way journey was £8.00 – some £2.10 above the cost of a 3 mile daytime trip. Estimates of the cost of a 3 mile journey averaged £4.70, £1.20 lower than the actual cost of £5.90.*
- *By far the busiest rank with respect to passenger departures is High Street 1, which in turn is fed primarily by High Street 2, although the second highest number of passenger departures were also recorded from the latter. All other ranks operate at levels significantly lower than this with Market Street being the busiest of the 3 remaining ranks. Use of the Cleveland Street rank is negligible and no use was observed at the Bus Station rank. Peaks in passenger demand occur both during the week and at weekends at around 11.00am, 15.00pm and 24.00pm.*
- *Overall there are an estimated 3,402 passenger departures per week from ranks, but this reflects only 10.8% of the overall market for taxis and Private Hire Vehicles. 3.1% are flag downs with the remaining 86% pre booked by telephone.*
- *Survey respondents said they waited on average 2.2 minutes at a rank for a taxi, while observations suggested the actual waiting time was only 0.07 minutes. Delays were not regarded as causing any significant dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction with delays was greatest on Friday and Saturday evening. The average taxi waiting time at ranks is 10.82 minutes.*
- *Car availability is the major reason cited by consultees and survey respondents for not using Hackneys. However, the ability to walk/cycle or use the bus was also an important alternative to Hackney use for some. There were nearly 14% of on street survey respondents that specifically said they had no need to use a Hackney, while just over 4% that said they preferred to use a PHV.*
- *Informal observations at the rail station identified activity by up to 18 different taxis across a total of 6 hours at this location. A Queue of taxis also built up on 10 separate occasions. The rail station was also highlighted by respondents to*

the on street survey and by written consultation with both operators and other stakeholders, as somewhere an additional rank would be particularly welcome.

- Consultation with the trade highlighted a desire on their part to make the Market Street rank a 24 hour rank and use this during the day as a further feeder for the High Street rank. In return they would be prepared to give up the Cleveland Street rank which could then be used for disabled parking. The rank observations undertaken confirm that the latter rank is hardly used.
- Available facilities at the ranks are limited in terms of waiting facilities, namely, seating and shelters, and information for taxi users.
- The on street survey suggested that awareness of the difference between Hackneys and PHVs was low and that a significant proportion judged the difference between the two by looking at other attributes (such as livery) besides the plate and roof sign.
- Disabled people and those stakeholders working with them would welcome driver training in manual handling and disability awareness for drivers. Information on where potential users could obtain a wheelchair accessible taxi would also be useful.
- Further guidance for licensing officers in general is due to be issued by DfT in the near future and they also intend to consult on how taxis should meet the requirements of DDA 2005.
- Lancashire County Council are keen to see improvements in driver training, operating standards and to support the development of Quality Taxi Partnerships.

## **Recommendations**

- Based on our analyses, Chorley Borough Council has the discretion to either:
  - i) maintain the limit at the current level of 37 Hackney licences;
  - ii) issue that number of Hackney Carriage licences as it sees fit; or
  - iii) remove the current limit on Hackney Carriages (de-limitation)
- If there is to be any change, to the current policy, this should be considered following the issue of DfT guidance to licensing authorities proposed for the near future.
- That any change to the vehicle specifications to require more or all Hackneys to be wheelchair accessible vehicles should only be considered following the outcome of DfT consultation proposed for the near future. In the absence of this, it is recommended that improvements in the accessibility of vehicles and services are encouraged on a voluntary basis or required when vehicles are renewed.
- It is recommended that negotiations take place with the Railway Station operator to provide a rank on a trial basis for a period of approximately 6 months. Activity during the pilot period should be monitored and the sustainability of the rank and any charge for its use (if operated as a private rank) be decided based on the results of this monitoring.
- To address service accessibility, service quality and standards of customer care issues identified consideration should be given to:
 

*In the short term*

  - encouraging drivers to seek assistance from the Train to Gain programme to pursue NVQ2 training, ensuring manual handling and disability awareness training are included in the programme
  - providing information on the difference between Hackneys and PHV's and promoting the use of the recently introduced vehicle livery to distinguish between these
  - monitoring of this through customer surveys and random mystery passengers

*In the longer term*

  - consideration of a more comprehensive quality taxi partnership (QTP) approach to increase liaison between licensing authority, police, other stakeholders and operators, provide a framework for bringing about mutually beneficial improvements across the taxi sector and a quality mark to participating operators, as has been found to be effective in other authorities.

o the framework provided by a QTP would also be useful for facilitating discussion on how best to optimise supply to address peaks in demand, delays in arrival times, congestion issues at ranks such as that in High Street and the formation of a standard framework for taxi commissioning.

- The licensing authority should consider the Taxi Association request to make Market Street rank a 24 hour rank and free up Cleveland Street for disabled parking.
- The licensing authority should provide information on which companies operate wheelchair accessible vehicle/s.
- The licensing authority should address the shortcomings in facilities at ranks, identified by the rank audit, in order to be sure all ranks comply with DDA, part 3, and to meet needs of users.
- The licensing authority should issue any guidance to taxi operators on how to address safety and security issues, due to be provided by government, following publication of their research into this issue.
- The anticipated useful life of the current survey is three years and we would recommend a further survey in Autumn 2011 in line with current Government guidance
- Future Transport Strategies and policy documents should take account of this report.

## CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Hackney Plate Levels – the recommendation arising from the survey proposes 3 options. Maintain the status quo; ‘derestrict’ the number of hackney plates available or set the hackney plate number to a level the Council sees fit. Since the current level of hackney plates appears to be sufficient for the current demand it is therefore recommended that the hackney plate numbers are retained at thirty seven.
11. Taxi Rank Changes – the survey indicated that provision of a taxi rank at Chorley Railway Station may ease the waiting times experienced by travellers and the queues of taxis at peak times. In addition the survey indicated that the Council should review its taxi rank provision in the light of user experience as well as the current location of some ranks. It is recommended that a review of taxi rank provision be undertaken in 2010 and a full report and recommendations made to Members
12. Driver Training – the survey identified a training need for taxi drivers to ensure they are fully conversant with customer service requirements. It is recommended that a review of the taxi driver licence conditions be undertaken in consultation with the taxi trade and its representatives to establish how this training need can be most appropriately met.
13. Disability Discrimination Act 2005 – the final recommendations from Government are still awaited on the implications of disability discrimination legislation for taxi provision. In the meantime officers will ensure operators, proprietors and drivers are made aware of their obligations and the Council will seek to encourage operators and proprietors to provide vehicles which facilitate disabled access when new vehicles are brought into the fleet.

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

14. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors’ comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	√
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	√
Legal	√	No significant implications in this area	

## COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF POLICY PERFORMANCE AND PLANNING

15. Disability representatives from the Council's Equality Forum took part in the survey. Any future proposals with regards to disability access issues and location once recommendations from government on the implications of disability discrimination legislation for taxi provision are received, the Equality Forum is an ideal vehicle for consulting on such proposals prior to implementation. In the meantime, information regarding where potential users can obtain a wheelchair accessible taxi can be shared at the next Equality Forum in April and be included on the Equality section of the Council's website.

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There are no background papers to this report.

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