

Gloucester City Council

COMMITTEE	: LICENSING AND ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE
DATE	: 12TH OCTOBER 2010
SUBJECT	: TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE SCRUTINY STUDY
DECISION TYPE	: POLICY AND FRAMEWORK
WARD	: ALL WARDS
REPORT BY	: LISA WILKES, FOOD AND LICENSING SERVICE MANAGER
NO. OF APPENDICES	: 1. TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE SURVEY REPORT 2. TAXI SCRUTINY STUDY ACTION PLAN 3. GLOS. COUNTY COUNCIL SPECIFICATION
REFERENCE NO.	: ES21011

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Members the Taxi/Private Hire survey report prepared by Mouchel Ltd on the current level of demand for hackney carriage and private hire services and Gloucester City Council's (GCC) current policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Having considered the report and subsequent Taxi Scrutiny Study Action Plan which incorporates the report's recommendations Members have the following options:
- (a) Accept the report and resulting recommendations contained within the Taxi Scrutiny Study Action Plan in full or in part, or
 - (b) Reject the report's recommendations contained within the Taxi Scrutiny Study Action Plan in full.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 GCC as the statutory licensing authority for hackney carriage (taxi) and private hire services is able to set safety and design standards for vehicles used, determine fares (for taxis) and limit the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences issued.
- 3.2 A previous study was conducted in 2002 by MCL Transport Consultants which resulted in calls from the trade for greater consultation in any future study.
- 3.3 The present survey is intended to provide GCC accurate, useful and robust information on all relevant aspects of taxi operations with reference to:
- (a) Understand the quality of service members of the public are experiencing.
 - (b) Apply the Department for Transport best practice guidance.

- (c) Provide robust evidence for an unmet demand study able to stand up in court.
- (d) Present an evidence base on which future improvements can be built using an action plan.
- (e) Involve stakeholders to the level that will encourage the ownership of any solutions brought forward.

- 3.4 The ability to place a restriction on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences granted is contained within section 16 of the Transport Act 1985. This provides that the grant of a taxi licence may be refused for the purposes of limiting the number of licensed taxis 'if, but only if, the local licensing authority is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages which is unmet'.
- 3.5 The Department for Transport Best Practice Guidance 2010 recommends that licensing authorities do not impose restrictions on the number of licences issued.
- 3.6 Section 161 of the Equalities Act 2010 which will come into force some time after April 2011 will restrict the ability of licensing authorities to control the number of Hackney Carriage Vehicles where the authority has relatively few numbers of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

4.0 PROGRESS

- 4.1 Mouchel Ltd were officially accepted to carry out the survey on 5 March 2010. An inception meeting was held on 18 March 2010 followed by meetings with representatives of the hackney carriage and private hire trade. The survey itself was carried out in April 2010. The full report by Mouchel is attached at Annex 1 of this report.
- 4.2 A representative from Mouchel Ltd will be present at the committee to present their findings and answer any queries that Members may have.
- 4.3 The action plan in appendix 3 has been prepared in liaison with the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade.

5.0 FUTURE WORK

- 5.1 The recommendations from Mouchel's report are contained within the Taxi Scrutiny Study Action Plan attached at Annex 2 of this report.
- 5.2 The Licensing Department has regular meetings with the trade and will discuss the implementation of the Action Plan's proposals.
- 5.3 It is proposed that if required surveys are carried out on a three yearly basis to ensure the positive development of the trade for the benefit of Gloucester.
- 5.4 Members are advised that the impact of the Equalities Act 2010 will be taken into account when determining any future action by GCC.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Members are advised to consider the information contained in Mouchel's report and proposals contained in the Taxi Scrutiny Study Action Plan and make a decision in accordance with paragraph 2.1 of this report.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Any work required to take the Action Plan forward will incur costs to GCC and partner agencies through staff time and related costs. The majority of these costs should be met through fees levied for the grant of licences to the trade.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 (to follow)

9.0 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS *(Authors to complete) Identify all key risks (scoring 8 and above) for the recommendation including the impact and likelihood of the risk occurring and what measures will be taken to mitigate the risk.*

9.1 None

10.0 PREDICTIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (EQUALITIES) AND COMMUNITY COHESION

10.1 The provision of an accessible fleet for all members of the public is recognised as important for all sections of the community and will be at the forefront of any decisions made by the licensing authority. The Equalities Act 2010 will enable the Secretary of State to make Regulations as to the design and type of licensed hackney carriage vehicles in order to ensure the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

10.2 Section 164 of the Equalities Act enables the licensing authority to apply for an exemption from any taxi accessibility regulations made. It is known that some less mobile members of the community who do not use wheelchairs can have difficulty in using wheelchair accessible vehicles due to their design. The option of an exemption will be considered if appropriate at any future date to ensure all members of the community have equal access to licensed vehicles.

11.0 OTHER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

1. Community Safety (Author to complete)

None

2. Environmental (Author to complete)

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensed drivers provide an important addition to the public transport provision in the City and so contribute to environmental sustainability.

3. Staffing (Human Resources to complete)

4. Trade Union (TU to complete)

None

- Background Papers** : Mouchel Ltd. Taxi/Private Hire Survey Final Report
- Published Papers** : Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 DfT – Taxi and Private Hire Licensing: Best Practice Guidance (2009)
Gloucester City Council Cabinet Report ES20206 (13th March 2002) – Study into the availability of Taxi's in Gloucester – Policies for review
Gloucester City Council Cabinet minutes 13th March 2002 – (minute 116.7)
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