

**REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S LIMITATION POLICY IN RESPECT TO AYLESBURY TOWN**

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 For Members to consider deferring an unmet demand survey in respect to the Council's hackney carriage limitation policy for Aylesbury town.

**2 Recommendations/for decision**

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| 2.1 For Members to agree to defer carrying out an unmet demand survey in respect to the Council's hackney carriage quantity control policy for Aylesbury town for the reasons set out in this report. |
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**3 Supporting information**

- 3.1 The number of hackney carriages (taxis) serving Aylesbury town is currently limited to 50. They are identifiable as black, purpose built taxis displaying a white plate on the rear. Outside the town in the rural district the Council do not limit the number of taxis.
- 3.2 Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 permits the Council to limit the number of taxis in respect of which licences are granted, if but only if the Council is satisfied that there is no significant demand which is unmet.
- 3.3 According to the Department for Transport Taxi and Private Hire Licensing: Best Practice Guidance dated March 2010, licensing authorities are encouraged to review quantity restriction policies every three years. The Department regards no quantity restrictions as best practice but acknowledges that ultimately what matters is what is in the interests of the taxi travelling public. This involves balancing the benefits and disadvantages of continuing to limit against those for removing it. So whilst the legal requirement to maintain a quantity restriction is unequivocally based on unmet demand, once established Members can also consider what is in the interests of the taxi travelling public.
- 3.4 The last full and detailed survey was carried out in 2014 and agreed in 2015. The survey concluded that there was no significant unmet demand. If the current Department for Transport Best Practice is to be strictly applied, demand should have again been surveyed in 2017.
- 3.5 In September 2017 the Licensing Committee agreed to defer carrying out an unmet demand survey to give hackney carriage vehicle proprietors the opportunity to upgrade their vehicles in accordance with the pending revised vehicle specifications. Members felt it was important that the availability of a fleet of new vehicles should be taken into account when considering demand for taxis. Due to commitments to other Licensing Service priorities, a new hackney carriage specification is yet to be finalised.
- 3.6 Arguably more significantly, access to ranks continues to be a contentious issue in Aylesbury town centre. Bucks County Council have implemented a number of changes to parking and traffic arrangements in Aylesbury Town Centre, which includes the installation of parking meters and removal or relocation of some ranks. Representatives from the taxi trade continue to report that these changes are causing them financial hardship and adversely affect their ability to serve travelling members of the public.
- 3.7 The Licensing Committee agreed on 21 May 2018 to again to defer the decision to carry out an unmet demand survey in respect of AVDC's hackney

carriage quantity control policy for Aylesbury Town Centre. As discussed at the meeting of 21 May 2018, the Principal Licensing Officer has continued to liaise with the BCC Parking Manager, and the Parking Manager has also attended AVDC's Taxi Working Group to discuss the matter with Council Officers and trade representatives of the local taxi and private hire vehicle operators.

- 3.8 The Parking Manager has reported that the parking situation in Aylesbury Town Centre is now a top priority in their work programme. Work has been ongoing to regularise and correct historic errors in the existing parking arrangements across the county. This work has necessitated further consultations to formalise current Experimental Traffic Orders which are required to be made permanent before further amendments can be made. A final consultation will be carried out in September, ending 8 October 2018, to regularise the current existing parking arrangements. Feedback from this consultation will then be considered when work begins on a further review of town centre parking arrangements, including consideration of the location of the town centre taxi ranks. The Parking Manager is keen to work with the Aylesbury town centre hackney carriage drivers and has offered to have further meetings with their representative. It is anticipated that consultation on future arrangements parking arrangements in Aylesbury will be ready for consultation in early December 2018 and consultation is likely to take at least three months. The Parking Manager has highlighted that this work is complex, with at least four different organisations within Bucks CC involved in ongoing strategic and planning decisions affecting traffic and parking arrangements.
- 3.9 As reported on 21 May 2018, until the long term provision of parking, ranks and traffic arrangements is established it will be difficult to conduct a meaningful unmet demand survey.
- 3.10 In the meantime the Parking Manager has reported that new signage has been ordered to help identify existing town centre ranks and clarify current parking restrictions. The county are also looking to trial new technological parking solutions which may be of benefit to taxi drivers, for example to identify when there is available parking on one of the ranks. Parking enforcement officers are also now deployed working late at night to assist with unauthorised parking in taxi ranks.
- 3.11 To date there are no further updates relating to the DfT 'Task and Finishing Group', the Statutory Guidance or Best Practice Guidance referred to at the meeting of 21 May.
- 3.12 As discussed at the meeting of 21 May 2018, officers have liaised with colleagues in planning about the potential redevelopment of the Courthouse in Aylesbury town centre. To date there has been no planning application, or pre-planning applications.

#### **4 Options considered**

- 4.1 None.

#### **5 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 In order to maintain a quantity restriction in respect to hackney carriages for the town of Aylesbury the Council are required to carry out an unmet demand survey. Current best practice guidance recommends that the imposition of a limit be reviewed every three years. However there are several factors that

potentially affect the outcome of a demand survey, specifically the introduction of new, higher specification vehicles, unresolved rank and parking provision and pending Department for Transport recommendations to Government and new guidance and best practice for Licensing Authorities.

## **6 Resource implications**

6.1 The cost of the survey will be covered by income from taxi licensing fees.

Contact Officer  
Background Documents

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Names of Background documents