

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Monday, 12th October, 2020

Present:- Councillors Manda Rigby (Chair), Sarah Bevan, Sue Craig, Sally Davis, Michael Evans, Steve Hedges, Sarah Moore, Mark Roper and Ryan Wills

Also in attendance: Cathryn Brown (Team Manager, Licensing and Environmental Protection), John Dowding (Lead Licensing Officer) and Carrie-Ann Evans (Deputy Team Leader, Legal Services)

Consultant: Ian Millership

1 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the other members of the Committee.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR (IF DESIRED)

A Vice-Chair was not required on this occasion at the Committee.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillors Grant Johnson and Karen Warrington had sent their apologies to the Committee.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

6 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS

There were none.

7 MINUTES: 5TH FEBRUARY 2020

The Committee approved these minutes as a correct record.

8 REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE UNMET DEMAND SURVEY REPORT 2020

The Team Manager for Licensing and Environmental Protection introduced this report to the Committee. She explained that the Council currently regulates the number of Hackney Carriage Proprietor Licences (HCPLs) in the city of Bath and

that because of this the Council is under a duty to carry out a review of any significant unmet demand every three years.

She stated that currently Hackney Carriages are restricted by zone and numbers within the authority. She informed the Committee that there are two zones which were set up at the time of local government reorganisation in 1996 - Zone 1 has the same boundaries as the former Bath City Council and Zone 2 has the same boundaries as the former Wansdyke District Council (now referred to as North East Somerset).

She said that there is no restriction on the number of Hackney Carriages in Zone 2 and that following the previous survey of unmet demand in 2017 the approved number of licences in Zone 1 (Bath) remained at 125.

She explained that the 2020 survey was undertaken to see if there was any significant demand that was unmet within Bath. She said that the survey was carried out prior to the lockdown in March 2020 and included over 250 hours of rank observation, pedestrian surveys and consultation with licensed vehicle drivers and stakeholders.

She invited Ian Millership, consultant of the survey report to give a presentation on his findings to the Committee, a summary of which is set out below.

Bath and North East Somerset Council Taxi Unmet Demand Survey

Aim of this survey

- Identify any significant unmet demand (or otherwise)
- Provide committee evidence of current position regarding unmet demand and its significance at this point in time
- N.B. All evidence collected in advance of the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic apart from key stakeholder consultation which was not practicable. Driver returns obtained during pandemic but with request (complied with) for detail for similar time to rank work.

Study timetable

- Undertaken February to mid-March 2020
- Rank observations early February 2020
- On street interviews very early March 2020
- All driver survey mid-March to mid- April 2020
- Key stakeholders consulted but no responses

Definitions

- HCV - Hackney Carriage Vehicles – Vehicles that can be taken from a rank, hailed or booked

- PHV - Private Hire Vehicles – Vehicles that can only be booked, many now use apps allowing much more immediate booking often based on proximity of vehicle
- WAV - Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles - Vehicles that can carry a passenger travelling in their wheelchair – a range of types but all have to be approved locally.
- Unmet demand – Someone arrives at a rank and there is no hackney carriage that could be available for immediate hire - excludes waiting for vehicle to move up to front of rank
- Private Ranks - Ranks on private land often with extra controls from land owner or its tenant or agents
- Significant unmet demand (latent demand) - Unmet demand at a level whereby its reduction can only be achieved by adding extra hackney carriage vehicles
- Latent demand - Less easily observable as people have changed their behaviour for lack of available vehicles

Rank activity

- 286 hours observed early February
- Bath Spa rank 50% of average weekly level, Abbey rank 22%, Westgate rank up to 15%
- Est of 10,737 passengers per week, 27% less than 2017

Public consultation

- 60% had used licensed vehicle (lv) in area in last 3 months (very similar to 62% in 2017)
- 1.3 lv trips per person per month, 0.5 hcv (was 2.2 and 1.2)
- Strong rise in app usage – 91% using a national app, 9% a local-based one
- Nearly all remember seeing hcv's - 44% could not remember when last used hcv

Stakeholder consultation

- COVID-19 meant no real response available
- Not a major issue as overwhelming picture is lack of any unmet demand of significance
- Even strong views from key stakeholders would not overturn the conclusions

Trade consultation

- 16% response (7% last time)
- 62% from private hire

- 86% owned own vehicle
- 14% said someone else drove (20% in 2017)
- 70% hcv respondents independent
- 23% used Bath Spa rank, 34% for Abbey
- 80% agreed with limit

Disability

- 96% public needing WAV would pre-book
- Low usage of WAV at ranks (one at station, one at Abbey)

Unmet demand evaluation

- Flow profile is peaky, in 22:00 hour Saturday
- Survey period Saturday demand met with about 73% of fleet
- Index of significance of unmet demand (ISUD) increased from last time (to 1.86 council, with station 0.73)
- Still long way from significance (80)

Key conclusions

- Continued overall reduction in rank-based demand
- No evidence of any unmet demand that is significant
- Covers both latent and patent demand
- Current limit policy can be retained
- Provides stability to trade and strongly supported by trade (PHV and HCV)

Final key comments

- Repeat survey with fresh surveys at any point up to October 2023
- No evidence that demand likely to become significant before then
- Review impact of pandemic to ensure no changes on supply side
- Most severe challenge for HCV trade is reduced station demand (and how quickly COVID-19 impacts will recede)

Councillor Michael Evans asked why the survey was carried out in February rather than August, considering Bath was a popular tourist destination city.

Ian Millership replied that the survey should be conducted within a typical period of activity within the city. He added that the results show that there is plenty of scope to cope with tourist demand.

Councillor Sue Craig asked which other Local Authorities enforce limit restrictions.

Ian Millership replied that around 25% of Local Authorities have a limit in place and that these are mainly in urban areas and more prevalent in the north of England. He added that Plymouth, Bournemouth and Poole do have a limit in place.

He said that he believed that having a limit in place was to the benefit of the B&NES public and that the majority of the local trade supports the limit.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked if they were aware that a number of Uber vehicles from outside of Bath were working within the City.

Ian Millership replied that a plate survey showed that from 500 different vehicles observed, only 10 were not from the area, so this was not a huge overall impact.

Councillor Hedges said that he felt that the trade was struggling because of Covid-19 and asked if the Council was helping the trade financially.

The Team Manager for Licensing and Environmental Protection replied that the Council were aware that they are under pressure and have put flexible arrangements in place in terms of fees and licences. She added that the feedback from drivers has been positive.

The Lead Licensing Officer added that the majority of drivers have decided to trade as normal with a minority choosing to defer their renewal.

The Chair asked if views had been gathered on whether passengers would be prepared to pay a premium to travel in an electric vehicle.

Ian Millership said that 66% had replied that they had no preference to this proposal, 20% would use one as long as it did not incur an extra cost and 13% would and were willing to pay more to travel in an electric vehicle.

The Chair asked if this information was being passed back to the trade.

Ian Millership replied that he felt that the Council has already done a good job with their messages back to the trade, especially the advice they have received regarding the Clean Air Zone.

The Lead Licensing Officer commented that nationally the trade was tentative about making the transition to electric vehicles because of the current range capabilities of the vehicles.

Councillor Sue Craig said that another barrier was the lack of public charging points available within the city.

Ian Millership said that he had worked with the Council for many years and would be willing to help if required in the interim three-year period between surveys to consider how they can be developed.

The Chair thanked Ian for the work carried out on the survey and his presentation today on behalf of the Committee.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend that:

- i) The number of vehicle licences in Zone 1 remains at 125
- ii) The limitation policy remains in place.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services