

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGULATION AND
ENFORCEMENT
TO THE LICENSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

30 SEPTEMBER 2020
ALL WARDS

POSTPONING THE 2020 HACKNEY CARRIAGE UNMET DEMAND SURVEY

1. Summary

- 1.1 Birmingham City Council currently operates a moratorium on the issue of new hackney carriage vehicle licences. Decisions about the continuation or abandonment of the moratorium are strongly influenced by regular demand surveys
- 1.2 The most recent unmet demand survey was conducted in 2017 and a new survey would normally be required during 2020.
- 1.3 If a survey was to be conducted in current circumstances, it is highly unlikely the results would be a true reflection of the trade in Birmingham or of levels of demand for hackney carriage vehicles.

2. Recommendation

Members agree:

- 2.1 That the unmet demand survey is postponed until such a time as traffic levels return to normal levels.
- 2.2 That the moratorium on new hackney carriage vehicle licences continues until a review can be conducted that includes data from the unmet demand survey.

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3.0 Background

- 3.1 A moratorium on the issue of new hackney carriage vehicle licences was implemented in October 2008 and has been maintained ever since, following analysis of unmet demand surveys completed in 2010, 2014 and 2017, each of which confirmed there was no significant underlying unmet demand for hackney carriages in Birmingham.
- 3.2 Officers were in the process of arranging a new survey in accordance with the requirements of Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 and the Department for Transport Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance 2010 (Sections 45 to 51 when the Covid19 pandemic caused the country to go into lockdown. Subsequently it has been impossible to continue with those arrangements and implementation of a survey will necessarily be delayed.

4. Postponing the Unmet Demand Survey

- 4.1 Having discussed with officers, Emma Rohomon, Licensing Service Manager submitted an enquiry to the Department for Transport (DfT) and received the following response:

Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 does not specify the frequency of the unmet demand assessment but the Department's Best Practice Guidance issued in 2010 suggested this is conducted every three years. Though the decision as to when an unmet demand survey is conducted remains that for a licensing authority, we are aware that we in a very unusual situation at present; while this continues it would seem highly unlikely that there would be significant unmet demand for taxis. We would expect unmet demand surveys would be conducted once travel levels return to more normal levels or if concerns are raised by the trade or public.

- 4.2 In light of the advice above and taking account of current circumstances where many people are working from home, shielding or simply changing their travel habits to assist with social distancing, it is likely any survey completed in the short to medium term would be of dubious value; with results skewed to show far lower demand than might reasonably be expected. Accordingly, the survey will of necessity be delayed, until such time as a more normal level of usage is apparent.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 No public consultation has taken place, however advice has been sought from DfT as detailed above.

6. Implications for Resources

6.1 None

7. Implications for Policy Priorities

7.1 This proposal supports the Regulation and Enforcement Division's mission statement to provide 'locally accountable and responsive fair regulation for all - achieving a safe, healthy, clean, green and fair trading city for residents, business and visitors'.

7.1 This proposal support the City Council's priority "Birmingham, an entrepreneurial city to learn, work and invest in"

8. Public Sector Equality Duty

8.1 No equality issues have been identified.

INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Background Papers: Nil