

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY (DIRECTOR)

|                  |  |            |  |
|------------------|--|------------|--|
| TO:              | LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE                         |            |  |
| DATE:            | 12 JULY 2022   |            |  |
| TITLE:           | POSTPONING THE 2022 HACKNEY CARRIAGE UNMET DEMAND SURVEY |            |  |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | TONY PAGE  | PORTFOLIO: | STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT |
| SERVICE:         | CLIMATE STRATEGY AND TRANSPORT                           | WARDS:     | BOROUGHWIDE                                |
| LEAD OFFICER:    | MARK GROVES  | TEL:       | 0118 937 2239                              |
| JOB TITLE:       | SENIOR LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT OFFICER                   | E-MAIL:    | mark.groves@reading.gov.uk                 |

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To allow members to consider if an Unmet Demand Survey should be carried out during the recovery of the Hackney Carriage trade following the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 1.2 To allow members to consider whether it is appropriate to amend the current limiting policy approach to hackney carriage numbers.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 Members note that due to the current financial hardship that is affecting the Reading Borough Council Hackney Carriage trade that the decision is made not to implement the survey in 2022 but to wait until October 2023 when it is hoped that the current financial difficulties following the Covid 19 pandemic will have eased following the return of business to the trade.
- 2.2 Members consider retaining the current policy of not issuing any further hackney carriage licences outside of the agreed number of 216 already licensed, as we have 3 vacant plates pending a review following the next survey in 2023.

#### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Town Police Clauses Act 1847, as amended by the Transport Act 1985, enables Councils to restrict the number of hackney carriage licences issued in their area, but only if they are satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for hackney carriage services. In order to be satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand a survey must be carried out, at least every three years.

#### 4. THE PROPOSAL

**4.1 Current Position:** A moratorium on the issue of new hackney carriage vehicle licences was implemented in March 2009 and has been maintained ever since, following analysis of unmet demand surveys completed in 2012, 2015 and 2018, each of which confirmed there was no significant underlying unmet demand for hackney carriages in Reading. Officers were in the process of arranging a new survey in accordance with the Taxi requirements of Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 and the Department for Transport and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance 2010 (Sections 45 to 51) when the Covid19 pandemic caused the country to go into 3 national lockdowns. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 the Licensing Applications Committee resolved to delay the Unmet Demand Survey for 12 months

**4.2 Options Proposed:** The following guidance has been produced by the Department for Transport which says:

*“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 are 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 to be conducted once travel levels return to more normal levels or if concerns are raised by the trade or public.”*

In light of the advice above and taking into account the current circumstances where many people are still working from home or are simply changing their travel habits even though all Covid restrictions have been lifted, it is likely that 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.

**4.3 Other Options Considered:** To hold the survey at a financial cost to the Hackney Carriage Trade. The cost of the survey would be somewhere in the region of £15,000 which would be a cost of between £55 - £60 to the 216 owner/drivers.

#### 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

##### 5.1 Thriving Communities

The Hackney Carriage trade have suffered financially as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic and as a result is having an impact on them both physically and mentally as they are working longer hours due to a reduced customer base using their service which in turn is affecting them mentally as the strain of longer hours, reduced income and increased running costs is affecting them on a daily basis.

**5.2 Working with the Hackney Carriage Trade and listening to their concerns, worries and understanding the stress that they are under and supporting them in re-building their essential service that they supply to the residents and visitors to Reading will only improve the already positive working relationship that RBC have with them.**

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no environmental or climate implications contained within this report as it only asking for a survey to be delayed for 12 months.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 A consultation was carried out with the Reading Taxi Association who represent a number of RBC licensed Hackney Carriage Drivers and also with the drivers themselves to capture those that are not members of the RTA. The consultation was carried out by email and just asked 2 questions of whether to hold or delay the Unmet Demand Survey.
- 7.2 At the time of writing this report we have received a reply from the Reading Taxi Association wholeheartedly requesting a delay for the Unmet Demand Survey and replies currently from 4 drivers asking for a delay to the survey until 2023.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 There is no impact on equality contained within this report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 and the Department for Transport and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance 2010 (Sections 45 to 51)

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The only financial implications will be those incurred by the licensed RBC Hackney Carriage owners/drivers.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Appendix i - Email to and reply from the RTA  
Appendix ii - Email to and ind replies from drivers  
Appendix iii - Climate Impact Assessment

From: RTA  
Sent: 29 March 2022 16:49  
To: Groves, Mark  
Subject: Re: Unmet Demand Survey.

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.  
Hi Mark,

Thank you for your email.

Apologies for the late response but we had our AGM on Sunday 27 March and wanted to speak to our members.

Currently only about 80% of the drivers are working and many rental drivers have not yet returned. We also have cabs available for rent on day shift, night shift and full time but unfortunately no drivers. Prior to the pandemic all of these cabs would be occupied by rental drivers. Furthermore the trade has only recovered 60-70% from the pandemic.

As such, we believe the right decision at the present moment would be to postpone the unmet demand survey for a further year.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards

Asif

On Tue, 8 Mar 2022 at 11:18, Groves, Mark wrote:

Good morning everyone,

Congratulations to you all on your re-election to the committee, enjoy the next 4 years.

Following on from our last meeting with Asif on the 9th February where it was asked if we could look at the prospect of carrying out the survey later in the year. I am asking if you could submit your thoughts and those of your members about carrying out the survey this year in an email so that I can bring it to the attention of the licensing sub-committee. If you could please let me know roughly how many members are currently operating, how many have stopped working for the pandemic and are yet to re-start and how many have taken up other forms of employment.

If you could reply by the Friday 25th March 22 that would be appreciated.

Regards

Mark Groves  
Senior Licensing & Enforcement Officer  
Licensing | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services  
Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU

Good afternoon everyone,

In June 2021 the licensing committee agreed to delay the unmet demand survey for a year due to the impact that the Covid pandemic was having on the trade. Even though the restrictions have been lifted there is still a financial impact being felt.

We are asking for your comments on whether the unmet demand survey should take place this year 2022 or should a request be made to the full Licensing Committee asking for a delay for a further year to 2023 to allow the trade to recover further from the pandemic.

Could I please have any comments emailed to the [licensing@reading.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@reading.gov.uk) inbox and marked 'UNMET DEMAND SURVEY 2022' in the subject box. Could these please be sent to us by no later than midnight on Wednesday 6th July 2022.

Regards

Mark Groves  
Senior Licensing & Enforcement Officer  
Licensing | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU

### **Driver replies**

From: Kamran Hussain  
Sent: 29 June 2022 14:27  
To: Licensing  
Subject: UNMET DEMAND SURVEY 2022

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.  
Delay for a further year, due to the impact of covid.

Kind regards

Kamran Hussain

From: Mahomed Ahamed  
Sent: 29 June 2022 16:13  
To: Licensing  
Subject: UNMET DEMAND SURVEY 2022

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.

Dear

Many thanks for your email and informing the details.

On opinion we should delay till the work gets completely normal and then on 2023 the survey can be done and the driver's, owners and licensing will have the best information about the trade.

Many thanks

M Ahamed

From: nadeem ali  
Sent: 29 June 2022 16:29  
To: Groves, Mark  
Subject: Re: Unmet demand survey

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.  
Hi think we should have the unmet demand survey done later in 2023, the licensing committee should allow more time so the trade gets back to normal.

Regards  
Nadeem Ali

From: Kamran Hussain  
Sent: 29 June 2022 14:27  
To: Licensing  
Subject: UNMET DEMAND SURVEY 2022 - fwd to Mark & Clyde - jd 29.6.22

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.  
Delay for a further year, due to the impact of covid.

Kind regards

Kamran Hussain

From: Jahangir Shan  
Sent: 01 July 2022 07:10  
To: Groves, Mark  
Subject: Re: Unmet demand survey

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.  
Hi Mark.

In reply to email. Our trade is not ready for an increase in taxis in Reading. Mainly due to drivers having to upgrade their taxis and weekly earnings not being enough to pay instalments and run households consecutively. It would be in everyones interest to delay the survey until next year.

From: Mohammed Saeed  
Sent: 01 July 2022 13:24  
To: Groves, Mark  
Subject: Re: Unmet demand survey

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.  
Hi

Following your email and the way work is after covid the survey should be delayed for 1 or 2 more years.  
thank you.

Mohammed Saeed

From: Oswald Thompson  
Sent: 01 July 2022 18:53  
To: Licensing  
Subject: Unmet demand survey 2022

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before you CLICK links or OPEN attachments.  
I confirm that a request be made to the full licensing committee asking for a delay for a further year to 2023.

Regards  
Oswald

From: Sajad  
Sent: 04 July 2022 09:24  
To: Licensing  
Subject: UNMET DEMAND SURVEY 2022

This is an EXTERNAL EMAIL. STOP THINK before CLICK links or OPEN attachments.

Dear licensing,

I think the survey should be delayed another year as we are still going through the side effects of covid.

Regards

Sajad Bashier

From: Moore, Peter  
Sent: 30 June 2022 15:11  
To: Groves, Mark  
Cc: Lewis, Catherine; Golledge, Matthew; Masson, Clyde; Climate Assessment  
Subject: RE: Climate Impact Assessment

Hi Mark and thank you for this. I concur with your conclusion that there are no impacts given the nature of the report and the recommendation. Should a future survey suggest unmet demand which might point to an expansion of the fleet that that might be the point where an impact might be expected and more robust assessment required - and I guess that would have to be considered in the context of the Emissions and Age Policy being applied.

Am copying to the [climateassessment@reading.gov.uk](mailto:climateassessment@reading.gov.uk) inbox which is where the guidance in the Committee Report template asks officers to submit draft reports and associated climate impact assessments - this is because it is monitored by my team in my absence so more likely to get a prompt response if I am on leave or otherwise absent - please note for future ref.

Kind regards

Peter Moore  
Head of Climate Strategy  
Directorate for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services  
Reading Borough Council

From: Groves, Mark  
Sent: 30 June 2022 15:00  
To: Moore, Peter  
Cc: Lewis, Catherine; Golledge, Matthew; Masson, Clyde  
Subject: Climate Impact Assessment

Good afternoon Peter,

Please accept my apologies but could you look at the attached licensing applications committee report and climate impact assessment that needs to be signed of as soon as possible as it needs to go the the full committee on the 12th July 2022. FYI there is no climate impact as it is just asking for a delay in a survey on behalf of the hackney carriage trade.

Regards

Mark Groves  
Senior Licensing & Enforcement Officer  
Licensing | Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services  
Reading Borough Council  
Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU