



## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To commission an independent Hackney Carriage Demand Survey to provide a detailed analysis of the current demand for Hackney Carriage services across the city and the ability of the existing fleet to meet that demand.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Wolverhampton's City Strategy outlines priorities for the city across three themed areas. The provision of Hackney Carriage services within the city impacts on a number of these priorities.
- 2.2 Ensuring an integrated, safe and accessible public transport infrastructure will enable conditions that allow businesses to flourish. This is a priority under the 'Encouraging Enterprise and Business' theme of the strategy. The provision of Hackney Carriage services particularly impacts on this priority. As the city further develops its entrepreneurial culture and grows there will be greater demands placed on these services.
- 2.3 There are also priorities that relate directly to improving the city centre and tackling crime there. As Hackney Carriage services play a significant role in the city centre's transportation infrastructure; ensuring that the fleet is capable of meeting the needs of the city will help the city realise this priority, without issues of poor provision materialising, and thereby allowing other opportunities arising from the strategy to be fully capitalised.
- 2.4 With these overarching aspirations in mind on 13 February 2013 the Licensing Committee agreed a series of proposals to incrementally relax the Hackney Carriage new vehicle age criteria and stimulate growth in the fleet.
- 2.5 The relaxations have allowed vehicles up to two and then four years of age join the fleet from 1 April 2013 and 2014 respectively. The requirement that all Hackney Carriages remain purpose built and wheelchair accessible has remained.
- 2.6 To date the policy has had a limited impact with only four additional vehicles joining the fleet using the relaxed criteria, this means the total; fleet at present is 174 vehicles.
- 2.7 The final increment of the revised age criteria is scheduled to come into effect on 1 April 2015 and will permit vehicles of up to six years of age to join the fleet.
- 2.8 However the trade have expressed concerns that the original ambitions of the policy detailed above are no longer relevant and requested that the number of Hackney Carriage licences issued by the council is capped at its current level. In order to introduce a cap on Hackney Carriage licences the council is required to evidence the existing fleet is sufficient to meet existing demand, this must be through an independent Hackney Carriage Demand Survey.

2.9 Employees do not agree with the views of the trade that the policy ambitions are no longer relevant, nor that the existing Hackney Carriage fleet is appropriate to meet the city's current and future needs.

2.10 A meeting of the Hackney Carriage Working Group was held on 9 March 2015 to consider the trade's concerns. The outcomes of that meeting are detailed in Section 3 of this report.

### **3.0 Proposals**

3.1 It is proposed that an independent Hackney Carriage Demand Survey is commissioned and presented back to the Licensing Committee for consideration.

3.2 It is also proposed to maintain the existing Hackney Carriage age criteria, which permits purpose built wheelchair accessible vehicles of up to four years of age to join the fleet, pending receipt of the survey.

### **4.0 Financial implications**

4.1 The cost of a Hackney Carriage Demand Survey is approximately £15,000. This cost will be met from Licensing budgets. [TK/13032015/Q]

### **5.0 Legal implications**

5.1 The law governing the licensing of Hackney Carriage vehicles is largely contained within The Town Police Clauses Act 1847, as amended and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

5.2 Hackney Carriage licensing is a non-executive function and it is therefore the responsibility of Licensing Committee to determine the policy and procedures in respect of this matter.

5.3 The proposal to maintain the existing age criteria until completion of the Hackney Carriage Demand Survey does not represent a policy change and as such no formal consultation process is required. However if following the survey the council should wish to change this policy then a consultation process will be required prior to any decision being taken.

5.4 There exists at present an inequality in the way new and replacement Hackney Carriage licence applications are dealt with. Currently the council's licence conditions stipulate that only purpose built vehicles of up to four years of age can be granted a new Hackney Carriage licence, whilst existing vehicles can be replaced with a vehicle up to five years old. This inequality may leave the current policy vulnerable to legal challenge. [SH/13032015/Y]

## **6.0 Equalities implications**

6.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010 places a responsibility on the council to pay due regard to any policies, procedures and decisions it makes. Due to this and other equality issues directly related to the subject of this report, an equality analysis will be undertaken as part of the Hackney Carriage Demand Survey.

## **7.0 Human resources implications**

7.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

## **8.0 Schedule of background papers**

- (i) Licensing Committee, Future Provision of Hackney Carriage Services, 13 February 2013