

Consultation on the review of Salford City Councils Taxi Licensing Policy and conditions

Background

Salford City Council has historically operated a policy of restricting the number of Hackney Carriage licence plates it issues using powers under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 as amended. Under this legislation councils can only restrict the number of taxi licence plates it issues if they are satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for taxi services in its area.

A report published by the Office of Fair Trading into taxi licensing recommended that local authorities should not impose quantity restrictions on taxis. However where local authorities wished to retain their restrictions policy, the report recommended that local authorities undertake surveys at regular intervals not exceeding three years to confirm there is still no unmet demand.

The Department for Transport has provided Best Practice Guidance to local authorities on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing which also recommends the lifting of such quantity restrictions.

Salford Licensing section has received representations from members of both the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trades expressing a view that there is currently an unmet demand for Hackney Carriage services in terms of meeting consumer demand at certain times of the day, in various geographical areas of and also in meeting the needs of the wheelchair users.

To assess the extent of the assertion that there is an unmet demand for Hackney Carriages in Salford and to seek the views of a range of stakeholders on the Councils' existing policy on restricting taxi numbers, the Licensing section undertook a postal survey of the following groups;

	No. surveyed	Response rate
Members of the public in each ward of the city	4712	569 (12%)
Members of the business community	613	67 (11%)
Councillors	59	13 (22%)
Wheelchair users	2329	34 (5.5%)

28% of the public, 31% of wheelchair users and 18% of councillors indicated they had experienced problems in obtaining the services of a black cab. 60% of businesses surveyed reported they had experienced difficulty in obtaining the services of a black cab for their customers.

When asked if the Council should make more black cabs available for hire by removing the existing policy of restricting the number of licenses it issues 49% of the public, 64% of businesses, 64% of councillors and 72% of wheelchair users indicated the quantity restriction should be removed.

Comments from those who were surveyed indicated there are major problems with hackney carriage availability during the time of school runs and also in the evening after 5pm.

Q1 In view of the guidance produced by central government and the findings of our consultation exercise, the City Council is considering removing its current policy of restricting the number of Hackney Carriage licences it issues

Do you agree with this?

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer

Salford City Council has reviewed the licence conditions for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and copies are appended for your information.

The principal changes to the hire conditions may be summarised as follows;

Hackney carriage vehicles

Increasing the range of vehicles which can be licensed as hackney carriages.

Age requirements

Private Hire vehicles to be no more than four years old when first submitted for licensing and no more than seven years old on renewal. Hackney carriage vehicles to be no more than four years old when first submitted for licensing and, in the case of 'London type' cabs no more than 10 years old on renewal, and for all other types no more than seven years old on renewal (to be implemented January 2010).

Documentation

Changes to the requirements for documentation to be presented when vehicles are submitted for licensing to show proof of ownership.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles

New requirements for wheelchair accessible vehicles.

New training requirements for drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Vehicle inspections

Changes to the requirements for vehicles inspections.

License plates

Changes to the procedure for the disposal of license plates.

Driver applications

Changes in application process to include an assessment of communication skills.

New conditions in relation to convictions, cautions and traffic offences affecting applications.

Dress code

Changes to 'dress code' prohibiting the wearing of vests, singlets, and sports gear such as football shirts and track suits.

Changes to operators conditions

Premises

The provision of 'Public Areas' which must be adequately equipped.

Vehicle / Drivers

The requirements for operators to check that drivers / vehicles are correctly insured / maintained and hold current relevant licences issued by the Salford City Council.

The records to be maintained in relation to the above for the required period of retention.

Radio / Telephone Equipment

Provision / maintenance of equipment in relation to call handling and creation of records relevant to the 'Operation' of the business.

Bookings

The minimum details to be recorded when 'Bookings' taken.

The records to be maintained in relation to the above for the required period of retention.

Q2 If you have any comments to make in relation to the proposals set out in the draft Hackney Carriage or Private Hire license conditions, please write in the box below (or continue on a separate sheet if necessary);

Taxi Ranks

Q3 Salford City Council is reviewing the location and provision of taxi ranks across the city as many of the ranks are in places where they are no longer used. In order to make taxis more accessible to the public can you please identify where you think taxi ranks should be (please continue on a separate sheet);

Taxi and Private Hire Forum

Salford City Council aims to ensure that taxi services delivered within the city are of a high standard. We are committed to working with the taxi trades and stakeholders to ensure taxi services meet the needs of the community.

We are considering establishing a taxi and private hire forum to discuss ways of developing and improving taxi services across the city.

Q4 Do you think this is a worthwhile undertaking (tick which box applies) Yes No

Q5 Would you wish to participate in such a scheme (tick which box applies) Yes No

Developing a quality award for taxi services

In working with the taxi trades we would like to develop a quality award for taxi services. Part of this process would be the production of a charter which sets out what passengers can expect from an accredited taxi business and also what the driver can expect from the passengers.

Q6 Do you think it would be worthwhile to develop such a scheme (tick which box applies) Yes No

Q7 Would you wish to participate in such a scheme (tick which box applies) Yes No

Q8 Are there any further comments you wish to make (please continue on a separate sheet)?

Q9 Which of the following areas do you relate to
Operator *One Man Operator/driver* *Private Hire Driver* *Hackney Carriage Driver*

If you wish to participate in any of the focus groups / forums identified please give your contact details.

Name	「	」	Tel. no.	「	」
	L	J		L	J
Address	「	」	Mobile	「	」
				L	J
			E-mail	「	」
	L	J		L	J

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.
Please return your completed questionnaire in the reply envelope provided by 25 July 2008