

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**LICENSING COMMITTEE – 23 NOVEMBER 2011**

Title of report	<b>HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE METERS</b>
Contacts	<p>Councillor Alison Smith 01530 835668 <a href="mailto:alison.smith@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">alison.smith@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Environmental Health Team Manager 01530 454610 <a href="mailto:lee.mansfield@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">lee.mansfield@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Licensing Team Leader 01530 454844 <a href="mailto:stephen.eyre@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">stephen.eyre@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p>
Purpose of report	To discuss a proposal to introduce a requirement for all licensed hackney carriage vehicles to have a taxi fare meter installed
Council Priorities	Improving our Town Centres
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	All licence holders would be required to purchase or lease a fare meter. No staffing implications
Link to relevant CAT	Business CAT
Risk Management	Should the trade view changes as being unduly stringent and unreasonably putting up the cost of operation, some licence holders may choose not to renew their licence resulting in a loss of income to the Council.
Equalities Impact Assessment	Not applicable
Human Rights	Not applicable
Transformational Government	This relates to the new ways in which council's are being asked to deliver their services.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is Satisfactory

Comments of Section 151 Officer	Report is Satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	Existing Hackney Carriage Driver Licence holders Existing Private Hire Operator Licence holders Other Licensing Authorities
Background papers	Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guide available from <a href="http://www.dft.gov.uk">www.dft.gov.uk</a>
Recommendations	<b>(1) TO INTRODUCE A REQUIREMENT FOR ALL LICENSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLES TO INSTALL A TAXI FARE METER AS PER THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPH 7.0</b>  <b>(2) TO AGREE THE DRAFT CONDITIONS RELATING TO THE INSTALLATION, CALIBRATION AND USE OF TAXI FARE METERS DETAILED AT PARAGRAPH 11 OF THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE LICENCE CONDITIONS (APPENDIX 1)</b>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At a meeting of the Driver Consultative Forum it was requested that we give consideration to introducing a pre licensing condition requiring the installation of a taxi meter for all hackney carriages. It was felt that this would help to resolve a problem of drivers overcharging customers and would ensure that charging was consistent.
- 1.2 Currently the decision to install a taxi fare meter is left to the discretion of the hackney carriage proprietor.
- 1.3 Between 2006 and 2011 the Council has received 18 complaints from the public relating to allegations of overcharging.
- 1.4 The Council has received anecdotal evidence from one of the largest taxi operators in the District that the irregularity or inconsistency of charging is a real issue in the District with many drivers both under and over charging.

## 2.0 BENCHMARKING

- 2.1 All other Licensing Authorities in Leicestershire require hackney carriage vehicles to fit and calibrate a taxi fare meter.
- 2.2 The majority of Licensing Authorities in England and Wales require hackney carriages to fit and calibrate a taxi fare meter.

### **3.0 PUBLIC AND DRIVER SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The aim of local authority licensing of the taxi and PHV trades is to protect the public. Local licensing authorities must also be aware that the public should have reasonable access to taxi and PHV services, because of the part they play in local transport provision. Licensing requirements which are unduly stringent will tend unreasonably to restrict the supply of taxi and PHV services, by putting up the cost of operation or otherwise restricting entry to the trade. Local licensing authorities should recognise that too restrictive an approach can work against the public interest – and can, indeed, have safety implications.
- 3.2 The Council has received reports from licensed drivers experiencing verbal abuse from customers who are not happy with the fare being charged at the end of the journey. It is expected that a visible meter will go some way to reducing the likelihood of this happening.

### **4.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS**

- 4.1 An initial stage of consultation involved undertaking a telephone survey, targeting a sample of existing licence holders. The majority of licence holders consulted were in favour of the proposals.
- 4.2 A report was presented to CLT on 4 October recommending the introduction of a requirement for all hackney carriages to fit and calibrate a taxi fare meter. CLT supported this recommendation and required further consultation to be carried out prior to a report being submitted to the Licensing Committee.
- 4.3 A second stage of consultation took place between 11 and 24 October.

The following organisations and groups have been consulted:

- Local Tourist Board
- Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce
- Coalville Town Centre Manager
- Ashby Town Council
- VOSA
- National Private Hire Association
- North West Leicestershire District Council Staff Disability Group
- General Public

The National Private Hire Association supports the requirement for all vehicles to have a fare meter installed. No other comments were received from the above list of consultees.

- 4.4 The final stage of consultation involved a further telephone and email survey, targeting existing licence holders. In total 54 hackney carriage drivers were consulted. The combined results of consultation with current licence holders showed that:

Of the 54 licence holders which were consulted:

- 61% (33) of drivers stated they were in support of installing a fare meter;
- 24% (13) were against the proposal; and
- 15% (8) did not have a strong opinion either way.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRENT LICENCE HOLDERS**

5.1 The current licensed vehicle fleet consists of 238 vehicles. Of the 238 vehicles, 88 are hackney carriage vehicles and 150 are private hire vehicles. Very few of the hackney carriages currently have a taxi fare meter fitted.

5.2 Every hackney carriage vehicle must have a fare meter fitted and calibrated. A fare meter can be purchased for approximately £200. Alternatively a meter can be leased.

5.3 It is anticipated that drivers will receive less complaints from customers of overcharging and will avoid hassle from customers haggling on price.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LICENSING AUTHORITY**

6.1 The licensing authority will need to introduce vehicle licence conditions relating to the correct installation, calibration and use of taxi fare meters. A draft set of conditions can be found at paragraph 11 of Appendix 1.

6.2 The licensing authority will need to be satisfied that all hackney carriages have been fitted with a fare meter in accordance with the implementation plan.

6.3 The licensing authority will need to obtain and check calibration certificates for all fare meters fitted.

6.4 The licensing authority will need to continue to monitor compliance including investigating any complaints relating to uncalibrated meters and tampering.

6.5 All additional duties relating to the implementation of the recommendation and ongoing monitoring can be undertaken with existing staffing levels

## **7.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

7.1 New Applications

From 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 any hackney carriage vehicle not fitted with a taxi fare meter will not be granted a licence.

7.2 Existing Licensed Vehicles

From 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012 any licensed hackney carriage vehicle not fitted with a taxi fare meter at the time of their renewal will have their renewal application refused.

7.3 From 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 any proprietor of a hackney carriage shall comply with the byelaws relating to the use of taxi fare meters.