

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF: Head of Refuse and Environment

TO: Licensing Committee

6/6/2011

WARDS: All

### **CONSULTATION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY**

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#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council has responsibility for licensing hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, drivers and operators within Cambridge City. The Council has traditionally exercised this responsibility through a number of different policies and procedures that have developed over a number of years.
- 1.2 In March 2010 the Department for Transport (DfT) produced an up to date Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guidance (Appendix 1).
- 1.3 Due to changes in service delivery with the Customer Service Centre and the above guidance, a full review of the policies has been undertaken. A new draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy has been developed consolidating all previous policies.
- 1.4 This is also an opportunity to update current practices, for example, within the DfT best practice guidance report, this highlights the benefits of having the option to offer to the drivers the choice of renewing their licences annually or every three years and potentially having an annual CRB check. Our current practice is to renew annually and carry out a CRB check every three years. Dependant on the feedback from the consultation we would seek to amend the Policy to reduce the burden for drivers and operators and administration costs.

- 1.5 The draft policy attached, as Appendix 2 will be subject to 12 weeks public consultation in accordance with the Government's Code of Practice. All comments will be considered and will formulate the final policy to be presented for adoption by licensing committee in October 2011.
- 1.6 At Environment Scrutiny Committee in June 2010 it was agreed that the current fee structure should be amended to create a fee banding system based on vehicle carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions and this new structure be adopted at Licensing Committee.
- 1.7 Below is the new proposed fee structure based on road tax bandings that will go out to consultation:

Band	CO2 Emission Figure (g/km)	Discount/ Surcharge	Proposed New Fee	Number of Current Taxis
A	Up to 100	-35%	£125	0
B	101-110	-30%	£135	1
C	111-120	-25%	£145	1
D	121-130	-20%	£155	10
E	131-140	-15%	£165	52
F	141-150	-10%	£175	33
G	151-165	-5%	£185	90
H	166-175	0	£195	30
I	176-185	5%	£205	33
J	186-200	10%	£215	110
K-M	201+	15%	£225	115
Unknown				33
TOTAL				508

- 1.8 By introducing the above fee structure this will ensure that Year 1 shows it to be cost neutral to the Council. It also is designed to encourage new vehicles to be greener, which will result in a discount in the annual licence fee. The fee structure will have to be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains cost neutral to the Council for future years.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended:

- 2.1 To note the content of the report and approve the consultation of the draft policy and process in order to adopt a final taxi licensing policy.
- 2.2 To approve the consultation of the new proposed sliding scale fee relating to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The DfT first issued its Best Practice Guidance in October 2006, and updated it in March 2010. The Guidance is not statutory, but the document is intended to assist licensing authorities. Paragraph 4 states that 'it is for individual licensing authorities to reach their own decision both on overall policies and on individual licensing matters, in the light of their own views of the relevant considerations'.
- 3.2 Traditionally each policy decision has been brought to Licensing Committee for approval and therefore there are a number of different policies relating to taxi licensing.
- 3.3 Currently, Cambridge City Council's conditions and policies relating to the Licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and drivers, and private hire operators are found in the City Council's 'Taxi Guide'. This was last updated in August 2009
- 3.4 In March 2011 consultation was undertaken to obtain the views of the public, trade and stakeholders on the introduction of a shared hackney carriage service and the introduction of a sliding scale for taxi licensing fees relating to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The final version of the consultation report is attached as Appendix 3.
- 3.5 The outcome of the study was that the majority of the trade were against a shared hackney carriage service and it was felt that such a scheme would not be successful in Cambridge.
- 3.6 The majority of the public felt that taxis should have higher fees for the more polluting vehicles; research has been carried out to look at the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the various types of vehicles.

### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

- 4.1 We are proposing to undertake 12 weeks consultation on the proposals in accordance with HM Government's Code of Practice on consultation. Consultation will be undertaken by a variety of means including letters to the trade, through the Taxi forum and on our website. It is envisaged that consultation will take place during 13 June – 4 September 2011.

- 4.2 Feedback is welcomed and all comments will be considered in preparation of the final document, although we will not be able to give individual responses to comments received.
- 4.3 The results of the consultation exercise will be put to members at the next licensing committee to take account of feedback from stakeholders and to consider any amendments to the policy.

## 5. **IMPLICATIONS**

### (a) **Financial Implications**

Provision is made in the council's budget for the taxi licensing service, which is run on cost recovery basis. The cost of consultation will form a part of the administrative function.

### (b) **Staffing Implications**

Existing staff resources will absorb any changes arising.

### (c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

Equality Impact Assessment has not yet been conducted but will be carried out on the new policy after the consultation process has been completed and before it is formally adopted.

### (d) **Environmental Implications**

If proprietors of licensed vehicles support such a scheme then a potential benefit could be a reduction in the environmental impact of the Council's current taxi and private hire fleet so that in time the City would have a fleet of modern, clean, fuel efficient taxis which would contribute to cleaner air for Cambridge.

### (e) **Community Safety**

Cambridge City Council has a duty to provide a safe and secure taxi service; this includes setting minimum standards of safety for all travelling passengers, including those with disabilities and mobility issues.

## **APPENDICES**

### Appendix 1

Department for Transport (DfT) Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guidance.

### Appendix 2

Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

### Appendix 3

Consultation Study by Halcrow Fox Ltd.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Fees and Conditions Report to Executive Councillor of Environmental and Waste Services 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2010

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