

LICENSING COMMITTEE

9 March 2016

Present: - Councillor Mike Lilley (Chairman)
Councillors Roger Buston, Nick Cope, Margaret Fairley-Crowe, Ray Gamble, Dave Harris, Mike Hogg, Darius Laws and Richard Martin

28. Hackney Carriage Vehicles // Survey of Unmet Demand

Councillor Lilley (in respect of the fact that he knew Mr Green) declared his non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure 7(5).

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Professional Services and received a presentation by Mr Iain MacDonald of Vector Transport Consultancy on the 2015 Unmet Demand Survey.

The Council currently restricted the number of hackney carriage vehicles that were permitted to be licensed in the Borough to 131. The unmet demand survey, undertaken every three years, was required in order to provide justification for the continued restriction of numbers. The Survey was carried out from 1 to 5 October 2015 in the town centre area and at the station ranks between 8 and 12 October 2015 with the main survey work being undertaken in November 2015. The survey identified that whilst there was no significant unmet demand that necessitated the creation of additional plates, there was a problem in the provision of taxis on Saturday nights.

Mr MacDonald addressed the Committee on the key findings of the report and commented that, in general, the quality of the service provided in Colchester had been found to be good; this was a credit to the drivers and to the Council. Mr MacDonald provided some detail on the waiting time of people queuing on a Saturday night and explained that whilst queues were observed, those in the queue were not waiting a significant length of time, in the region of 5 to 6 minutes. The Council was however keen to address this issue; it wished to enable people to leave the town swiftly at the end of the night to minimize the potential for trouble which could result from individuals remaining in the area for prolonged periods. Mr Green, Secretary of the Hackney Carriage Association, addressed the Committee on this point and confirmed that it had already been the subject of discussion between the Association and the Licensing Manager; the Association was keen to work with the Council to address this matter.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr MacDonald responded that measures to address peak demand were likely to be more effective than an increase

in the number of taxis which would in itself be problematic because of the extremely limited rank space available. The possibility of increasing space, relocating ranks and enforcing parking restrictions was widely discussed and whilst there was an agreed desire to improve the situation it was acknowledged that the solutions were reliant of the work of other agencies such as the County Council. Any action that could be taken by the Borough Council such as enforcing the Head Street rank should be pursued.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) the Unmet Demand Survey for 2015 be noted.
- (ii) the current limit on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences of 131 be maintained.
- (iii) officers are requested to look at the issues regarding the ranks and report their findings to a future meeting of the Committee.