

INFORMATION NOTE

Hackney Carriage Licences

1. A current licensed private hire operator, vehicle and driver has recently contacted a number of Councillors and officers in relation to the issue of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences.
2. The issue concerns what the operator considers to be the purchasing of hackney carriage plates and how other operators are looking to purchase a large number which may result in a monopoly. The operator has referred the matter to the Competition and Markets Authority and Officers are awaiting subsequent advice from them.
3. By way of background, Fylde Council has partially de-regulated its hackney carriage numbers. As such, additional hackney carriages vehicle licences will be granted to wheelchair accessible vehicles which are less than 6 years old, a policy which initially came into force in 2005 and has been varied over the years to encourage more vehicles.
4. Prior to this, numbers were restricted as there was not considered to be a significant unmet demand and it was therefore unlikely that additional licences would be issued on request.
5. Currently in Fylde there are 106 hackney carriages licensed. 48 are affiliated to Whitesides of which 19 are owned by the Whiteside family, 15 are affiliated to Premier, of which 13 are owned by them. There are 32 independents whilst the remainder are smaller operators. Of those 106, 9 are wheelchair accessible vehicles which have been introduced since partial de-regulation.
6. In an email to the Chairman of the Finance and Democracy Committee, the operator has raised concerns about:
 - The number of taxi licences being purchased by operators from inside and outside the Borough,
 - Issues relating to Uber and the potential impact upon the industry including out of district operators
 - The transfer of hackney carriage plates and their “Black Market Street value”
7. It should be noted that the plate/licence for a hackney carriage remains the property of the Local Authority and it may not be disposed of separately from the vehicle (Challoner v Evans). As such, when transfer applications are received for the ownership of a vehicle to be passed to a second party, ownership of the vehicle will also pass. Officers will expect to see either a bill of sale or a vehicles log book to ensure vehicle ownership is being passed on.
8. The actual cost of an annual hackney carriage licence is £185 whilst a transfer application is £36.00. However, Officers are aware that in this Borough and also those in which the issue of hackney carriage licences is regulated there will be a “value” to the plates, agreed between the 2 parties. The Local Authority play no role in this “value” but it should be noted that S49 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 considers the transfer of both hackney carriage and private hire licensing and creates an offence should a proprietor fail to give notice of a transfer.
9. The query does make reference to the possibility of a monopoly or a cartel and Officers await the views of the Competition and Markets Authority and the potential national impact upon hackney carriage licensing. However, to re-assure members it should be noted that:
 - a) Additional hackney carriage licences will be issued in Fylde for an appropriate vehicle
 - b) The taxi fees are determined by the Local Authority
 - c) Taxi fares are determined by the Local Authority and are also subject to public consultation.

FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM

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