
Response to the Help the Taxi Trade Go Greener Motion

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	22 September 2022
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	1 September 2022
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4215

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To set out a response to the motion tabled by Councillor Adrian Abbs at the 18 January 2022 Council meeting which sought to introduce a fee based incentive scheme to help all forms of vehicles licensed by West Berkshire for public transport to go green.
- 1.2 The motion also asked that consideration be given to the provision (where practical) of fast charging points next to taxi ranks to remove range anxiety for taxi drivers.

2 Recommendations

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **CONSIDERS** the motion tabled at the January 2022 Council meeting set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 **AGREES** to the introduction of a fee based remittance scheme, subsidised by the Council and that it be introduced from 01 April 2023 for both electric and hybrid vehicles.
- 2.3 **AGREES** that a 100% remittance be applied to all electric vehicles.
- 2.4 **AGREES** that a 50% remittance would to be applied to hybrid vehicles.
- 2.5 **AGREES** that the criteria that should be applied to hybrid vehicles is that the vehicles should be zero emission capable (ZEC). This term includes plug-in hybrid vehicles but sets a minimum distance or range that the vehicle must be able to be driven without any exhaust emissions of 30 miles (in accordance with the manufacturers specifications), as well as a maximum g/CO2/km of less than 50g/km .

- 2.6 **AGREES** that the number of vehicles that could apply for a subsidy should not be limited.
- 2.7 **AGREES** that the scheme should be subject to an annual review and be in place for a maximum of three years commencing 1st April 2023.
- 2.8 **AGREES** that the funding required to support the project be set aside and drawn down as required.
- 2.9 **AGREES** that the outcome of the feasibility studies looking into the installation of charging points be considered before any decision is made about locating fast charging points in taxi ranks and that the progress associated with installation be reported back to the Licensing Committee on an annual basis.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>Discretionary fees and charges relating to licences and registrations are based on cost recovery, and should they not reflect the cost of providing the service, there is a risk of generating a surplus or deficit. If Members agree that the fees be modified the modifications would need to take the form of a remittance which will need to be met from the Council’s budget in the form of a subsidy and not from the Public Protection Partnership’s (PPP) budget.</p> <p>The financial implications of the report presented to the Licensing Committee were discussed with the S151 Officer and the Senior Finance Manager and advice was sought from external financial consultants in relation to options around loans, grants and financing electric vehicles for the trade.</p> <p>Should the Executive be minded to support the proposal in respect of the licence fee incentives the maximum budget exposure would be in the vicinity on £70k per annum (assuming a 100% take up and all vehicles being fully electric). If the number of vehicles return to pre-pandemic levels this is likely to be in the vicinity of £85k based on the same assumptions. See paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the initial take up would equate to no more than about 10 vehicles in the first year based on historical trends.</p> <p>If the proposals around fees are accepted by the Executive then they would need to form part of the budget setting process, and the prioritisation of these proposals would need</p>

	<p>to be considered against other Council priorities and the wider financial position that the Council faces when setting its budget.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>There are no HR implications associated with the production of this report.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>Legal provisions in relation to taxi vehicle licensing fees are contained in s.70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.</p> <p>The licensing fees recoverable by a local authority in respect of vehicles and operators is limited to vehicle inspection costs for the specific purpose of determining their suitability to be licensed, reasonable cost of providing hackney carriage stands, reasonable administration costs for processing the licence application and finally reasonable costs associated with “...control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.”</p> <p>S.70 goes on to describe some further conditions and the process when setting or varying the fee. Any variations to the existing fee amounts would need to be subjected to the prescribed statutory process including a 28 day consultation period.</p> <p>This motion does not impact directly on the chargeable fee setting, as those amounts are determined by the reasonable costs incurred by Public Protection Partnership for vehicle inspection etc. (see above).</p> <p>S.70(6) is the relevant provision for the purposes of this motion, as this gives the Council the power to remit fees;</p> <p>Under s.70(6) a local authority “<i>may remit the whole or part of any fee chargeable in pursuance of this section... in any case in which they think it appropriate to do so.</i>”</p> <p>Laura Knowles, People Team Solicitor – 16 August 2022</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>All decisions are potentially subject to legal challenge. It is therefore important that the fees and methodology are subject to ongoing review. This proposal does not impact on the fee setting directly (which is determined by cost to PPP). Any decision about whether to remit the fees in full or in part must consider whether it is appropriate in the circumstances.</p>

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	<p>Setting a time limit on the scheme and then carrying out annual reviews will reduce the potential reputational, financial and legal risks to the Council.</p> <p>The Council would need to ensure that it did not confer an advantage on one organisation over another using Council resources.</p>			
Property:	There are no property implications associated with this report.			
Policy:	<p>It is an aim of the Council's ULEV Strategy 2020-30 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to consider going ULEV</i> <p>Any relevant changes to policy will also be reflected in the Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which is currently being consulted on.</p>			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		No evident contribution to inequality in relation to this report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		It is not envisaged that the proposals will have more or less of an impact on those with protected characteristics than other residents or users of taxis in the District.

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Environmental Impact:	X			If Members are minded to support the motion and the trade are incentivised to make changes to the vehicle fleet this might have a positive impact on the environment.
Health Impact:	X			If Members are minded to support the motion and the trade are incentivised to make changes to the vehicle fleet this might have then have a positive impact on the health of residents.
ICT Impact:		X		No impact
Digital Services Impact:		X		As part of business as usual activity the PPP will make use of the website and social media platforms to raise awareness of any incentives, initiatives and infrastructure to help the taxi trade go greener.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire. Maintain a Green District. Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships.
Core Business:	X			The Public Protection Service Delivery Plan 2021-23 acknowledges that all partner Councils have developed agendas around climate change and it therefore requires the PPP to work with taxi and private hire operators to encourage / incentivise the move to electric vehicles (EVs).
Data Impact:		X		No impact

Consultation and Engagement:	<p>The Environment Advisory Group and the Licensing Committee have been consulted on this motion and wider initiatives to assist the taxi trade to go greener. An annual report on these matters will go to the June/July Licensing Committee meeting from July 2023. Ongoing discussions will take place at the Taxi Liaison Group meetings. The PPP is currently consulting on the Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. More information about the consultation which is due to close on the 04 October 2022 can be found here.</p> <p>Following discussions with colleagues in the Transport and Environment Delivery Teams it has been confirmed that most PHEVs have an electric-only range of around 30 miles and the criteria that has been proposed has been amended to reflect that position.</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report provides a response to a motion tabled at the 18th January 2022 Council meeting which called on the Council to commit to introducing a subsidised licence fee for electric and hybrid vehicles within the 2023/24 budget and to providing (where practical) fast charging points next to taxi ranks to remove range anxiety for taxi drivers.
- 4.2 The proposals were discussed at the Environment Advisory Group in April 2022 as well as the July 2022 Licensing Committee meeting as directed by Council. The responses to the motion are set out in paragraph 7.1.
- 4.3 The Executive is asked to consider the recommendations in light of other Council priorities and the wider financial position that the Council faces when setting its budget. The potential maximum exposure for the Council should 100% of all vehicles be switched to fully electric taxis would be in the vicinity of £70k (based on the 2022 vehicle numbers and 2023/24 proposed fees) and £85k should the number of vehicles return to pre-pandemic levels. Historical trends would suggest that the actual take up would cost a lot less.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 Councillor Adrian Abbs tabled a motion at the 18 January 2022 Council meeting which called on the authority to commit to introducing a taxi licence fee scheme that would introduce a zero-licence fee tariff for any taxi that is powered fully by electricity and a 50% reduction of the licence fee for any taxi that can do a minimum of 50 miles on electric power before switching to fossil fuel. The motion also asked the Council to commit to providing (where practical) fast charging points next to taxi ranks to remove range anxiety for taxi drivers. A copy of the full motion is attached at Appendix A to this report.

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- 5.2 The then Chairman of Council advised that Members would not debate the Motion at the meeting and, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.9.8, this would be referred to the Environment Advisory Group (EAG) for consideration as the detail of the Motion falls within the remit of the Executive. The EAG would in turn consult the Licensing Committee who would respond to the motion and make a recommendation to the Executive.
- 5.3 A report was considered at the 04 April 2022 EAG meeting. This report addressed the motion as well as wider opportunities for the Council to take forward the work to support the taxi trade to go greener. Members were supportive of identifying incentives that might induce the trade to move to more environmentally friendly vehicles while recognising the barriers that the trade had raised about switching to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs). These barriers had been identified in a survey undertaken by the Environment Delivery Team in April 2021.
- 5.4 A report was then prepared for the 04 July Licensing Committee meeting which set out a range of options available to the Council to assist the local taxi trade to 'go greener' and provide incentives to entice them to switch to ULEVs. The report also sought direction from Members in order to formulate a response to the motion for the Executive to consider.
- 5.5 The Licensing Committee have committed to ongoing discussions and production of an annual report to take the work to support the taxi trade to go greener forward. The EAG will continue to consider infrastructure changes to support the trade. In addition it should also be noted that the Public Protection Partnership has secured a grant from DEFRA to undertake a behavioural change project around air quality. A contractor had been appointed and they have started collecting a range of baseline data. A lot of work will focus around an anti-idling campaign. Specific areas including taxi ranks will be targeted.
- 5.6 This report however only seeks only to provide a response to the motion.

6 Background

- 6.1 As at the 31 March 2022 the Council had granted the following number of vehicle licences:

	Licence Type	No Issued
Vehicle	Hackney Carriage Vehicle	123
	Private Hire Vehicle	138
	Total	261

- 6.2 Due to the unprecedented time the trade has been through over the past few years the data for the preceding three years is also set out below:

Licence Type	At 31/03/2021	At 31/03/2020	At 31/03/2019
Private Hire Vehicle Licence	127	163	156
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	133	153	159

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Total	260	316	315
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- 6.3 The Licensing Team cannot confirm the number of electric vehicles that are currently operated in West Berkshire as this information is not specifically recorded but there are at least four Private Hire vehicles operated by a company that only use EVs.
- 6.4 The following Vehicle Fees and Charges were agreed at the Budget Council meeting in 2022:

Vehicle Licences	2022/23 Fee
Hackney Carriage Vehicle – New	£266
Hackney Carriage Vehicle – Renewal	£236
Private Hire Vehicle – New	£266
Private Hire Vehicle – Renewal	£236

- 6.5 The fees for 2023/24 are yet to be set. Any variation to the existing fees will be subjected to the prescribed consultation process. The proposed fees going to the Joint Public Protection Committee on the 19 September 2022 are as follows:

Vehicle Licences	Proposed 2023/24 Fee
Hackney Carriage Vehicle – New	£288
Hackney Carriage Vehicle – Renewal	£256
Private Hire Vehicle – New	£288
Private Hire Vehicle – Renewal	£256

- 6.6 The Licensing Committee, in relation to the wider discussion on supporting the taxi trade to go greener commented that:
- where possible the Council should act as an enabler and not a provider to assist the taxi trade;
 - market forces, including current fuel costs, might act as an incentive for the trade to switch to ULEVs;
 - ongoing discussions about ways to support the trade to go greener should take place on an annual basis;
 - the range the vehicles could achieve was still a major inhibitor albeit that technology was constantly evolving;
 - in principle they supported the notion of providing grants to assist the trade to switch to ULEVs but this would need to be fully costed and should reflect not only the capital costs but the associated revenue costs too. It was likely that the higher the grant the more take up there was likely to be. This work would be the subject of a separate report.
 - they supported identifying external grant funding solutions which could be advertised to the trade;
 - they would not support capping the cost of EV rapid charges for taxis licensed on the Council's network;

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- they would consider providing access to free overnight parking with access to charging points to assist drivers that could not charge their vehicles at home but that this would require input from the Parking Team to identify appropriate locations;
- they did not support a budget bid to purchase electric vehicles which would then be loaned to the trade due to the legal and financial implications of doing so;
- they did not support setting up a fund so that the Council could act as a lender to the trade to purchase electric vehicles due to the legal and financial implications of doing so. Some Members were however supportive of identifying opportunities for the trade (in both West Berkshire and other local authorities) and professional leasing companies to be brought together.

7 Proposals

7.1 In light of the discussion at the EAG meeting and the Licensing Committee the following responses to the requests set out in the motion are proposed:

Motion: The Council Commits to:	Response Proposed by the Licensing Committee
<p>Introducing a subsidised incentive for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles licensed by West Berkshire Council within next year's budget.</p> <p>The incentive scheme would comprise a zero-licence fee tariff for any taxi that is powered fully by electricity and a 50% reduction of the licence fee for any taxi that can do a minimum of 50 miles on electric power before switching to fossil fuel - known often as plug-in hybrids</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A time limited fee based remittance scheme, subsidised by the Council, to be introduced from 01 April 2023 for both electric and hybrid vehicles. 2. A 100% remittance to be applied to all electric vehicles. 3. A 50% remittance would to be applied to hybrid vehicles. 4. The number of vehicles that could apply for a subsidy should not be limited. 5. The application of the remittance to be reviewed on an annual basis and the scheme to be in place for a maximum three year period. 6. The funding required to support the project to be set aside and drawn down as required. 7. The criteria that should be applied to hybrid vehicles is that the vehicles should be zero emission capable (ZEC). This term includes plug-in hybrid vehicles but sets a minimum distance or range that the vehicle must be able to be driven without any exhaust emissions of 30 miles (in accordance with the manufacturers specifications), as well as a maximum g/CO2/km of less than 50g/km .
<p>Providing (where practical) fast charging</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. The Environment Delivery Team have a target to install Charge points in approximately 25 car

<p>points next to taxi ranks to remove range anxiety for taxi drivers.</p>	<p>parks this financial year so this will be a significant undertaking and impact on ability to consider taxi ranks as well. Depending on feasibility studies it may be that rapid charging points are installed in Public Car Parks, instead of or alongside fast chargers. The outcome of the feasibility studies to be considered before any decision is made.</p> <p>9. Progress on installation to be reported back to the Licensing Committee on an annual basis.</p>
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8 Other options considered

- 8.1 The Licensing Committee considered limiting the number of cases where fees would be remitted that could be issued annually but given that the licenses are issued on a rolling basis they did not want to disadvantage licensees that were applying later in the year.
- 8.2 They also considered limiting the remittance scheme to fully electric vehicles only but given the costs of the vehicles and the concerns around vehicle range they felt that a remittance should be applied to both types of vehicles albeit on different scales.
- 8.3 The Committee also considered not recommending a remittance but decided against this option due to the desire to support the trade to switch to electric vehicles.
- 8.4 The Committee also considered a number of options in relations to grants, purchasing vehicles and loaning them to the trade, capping EV charges etc and those responses are referred to in section 6.6 of this report.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Council is committed to working with the trade to assist them to moving to more environmentally friendly vehicles and practices. Some of these changes will be driven through the revised draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which is currently being consulted on. Behavioural Change will also be delivered through the anti-idling campaign which was currently being implemented. While the introduction of a remittance scheme and charging points will not, as standalone measures, deliver change it is hoped that they will form part of a range of measures to be introduced in consultation with the trade.

10 Appendices

Appendix A – Full Motion

Background Papers:

[Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#)

Report on [Helping the Taxi Trade to Go Greener](#) at the 04 July Licensing Committee meeting which includes the April 2021 Survey of the taxi trade.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: All

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