

COUNCIL MEETING - 7 JULY 2015

AGENDA ITEM: 5

(B) QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Syed Abbas to ask the Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services: Hackney Carriages

Renting cab as a taxi driver is organised slavery, who is responsible?

RESPONSE by Councillor Gittings (Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services)

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 details that modern slavery encompasses human trafficking, slavery, forced labour and domestic servitude.

Whilst you may consider that renting a cab rather than owning a cab is restrictive, the Council in its stewardship of Hackney Carriages, has not found any evidence to substantiate that you, or others in your situation, are being forced to work.

If you feel that this is not the case, the Police are responsible for investigating these matters.

To answer your question as to who is responsible for the current policy, you will know that the council has previously considered your concerns regarding the number of Hackney Carriage plates that have been issued.

It is within the Council's powers to make a local decision on limiting the number of Hackney Carriage licence vehicles it will issue and at present some 28% of local authorities do limit their Hackney Carriage numbers.

The limit can only be justified under the Transport Act 1985 if the local authority is satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages in the borough.

In line with guidance from the Department of Transport and recommendations from the Law Commission in their 2014 'Reforming the law of taxi and private hire services' report, an unmet demand survey is carried out every three years.

At our meeting, we gave a guarantee, in line with our timetable, to continue with the unmet demand survey, due to be completed in October of this year.

I would conclude, that there is no law restricting or requiring Hackney Carriage owners to rent their vehicles to other drivers, subject to them having a valid Hackney Carriage Vehicle drivers licence.

2. Masud Mazhar to ask the Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services:
Hackney Carriages

We provided proper evidence, black marketing is going on high level.

Local Government is failed to provide justice.

Why ?

RESPONSE by Councillor Gittings (Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services)

I met with you and other members of the Reading Taxi Drivers Association in December last year to discuss the matter I believe you are referring to in your question.

The then chair of licensing was also present at the meeting and we promised to fully investigate your concerns.

This investigation was carried out and reported to the Licensing Committee, with advice from legal services.

The outcome of the investigation and consideration by Committee was that your complaints were dismissed.