

Agenda



Listening Learning Leading

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Date: 28 June 2013

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A MEETING OF THE

General Licensing Committee

WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY 8 JULY 2013 AT 3.00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH
GIFFORD

Members of the Committee:

Mr Malcolm Leonard (Chairman)

Mrs Elizabeth Gillespie
(Vice-Chairman)
Ms Joan Bland
Mr Bernard Cooper

Mrs Pat Dawe
Mrs Ann Midwinter
Ms Anne Purse

Mrs Pearl Slatter
Mrs Margaret Turner
Mr Michael Welply

Substitutes

Mr Roger Bell
Mr David Bretherton
Mrs Celia Collett, MBE
Mrs Margaret Davies
Mr Mark Gray
Mr Will Hall

Mr Tony Harbour
Mrs Eleanor Hards
Mr Marcus Harris
Mr Stephen Harrod
Mr Marc Hiles
Dr Christopher Hood

Ms Lynn Lloyd
Mrs Denise Macdonald
Mr Alan Rooke
Mr David Turner

If you would like a copy of these papers in large print, Braille or audio cassette or have any other special requirements (such as access facilities) please contact the officer named on this agenda. Please give as much notice as possible before the meeting

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest**
- 3 **Addresses to the committee**

Members of the public may address the committee for up to five minutes about the items on the agenda provided they have registered to speak by contacting democratic services by noon on Friday 5 July.
Contact details are at the top of this agenda.

- 4 **Minutes of the previous meeting** (Pages 3 - 4)

Minutes of the meeting of 16 May 2013 (**attached**)

- 5 **Hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire District Council area** (Pages 5 - 34)

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (**attached**)

Purpose: to consider the results of the public consultation in order to decide whether the hackney carriage tariff should be set by individual operators or by South Oxfordshire District Council.

The committee is asked to consider the consultation responses set out in Appendix One and recommend Council whether to:

- a. allow drivers and operators to continue to set their own tariffs; or
- b. introduce a council set tariff and undertake a statutory consultation with the trade on structuring and setting the tariff.

MARGARET REED

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

General Licensing Committee

HELD ON THE RISING OF THE PRECEDING MEETING OF ANNUAL
COUNCIL ON THURSDAY 16 MAY 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH
GIFFORD

Present:

Mr Malcolm Leonard (Chairman)

Mrs Elizabeth Gillespie (Vice-Chairman), Mr Bernard Cooper, Mrs Pat Dawe,
Mrs Ann Midwinter, Mrs Pearl Slatter, Mrs Margaret Turner and Mr Michael Welply

Apologies:

Ms Joan Bland and Ms Anne Purse tendered apologies.

Officers: Steven Corrigan and Margaret Reed

1 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15
January 2013 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign
them.

3 Appointment of taxi licensing panels

The committee considered a proposal to appoint sub-committees to consider matters
under the Taxi Licensing Policy.

RESOLVED: to

1. appoint sub-committees comprising any three members, or
their appointed substitutes, of the General Licensing
Committee;

2. agree that the sub-committees be known as taxi licensing panels;
3. appoint each member or substitute of the General Licensing Committee to serve on any taxi licensing panel which is convened so as to include her or him in its membership;
4. authorise each taxi licensing panel to discharge all functions relating to matters referred to the committee or to its sub-committees under the Taxi Licensing Policy;
5. agree that wherever possible applications should be heard by a panel comprising the chairman or vice-chairman of the committee plus two other members of the committee, but that this should not affect the principle that any three members or their substitutes of the committee will constitute a properly appointed panel;
6. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to invite an appropriate panel to conduct a scheduled hearing having regard to members' availability and eligibility to take part and ensuring that as far as possible all members of the committee have the opportunity to conduct hearings.

The meeting closed at 6.35pm

Chairman _____

Date

General Licensing Committee Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Author: Robert Draper

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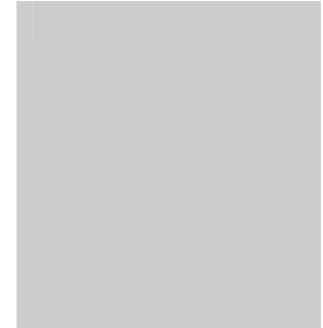
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Wards affected: All

To: General Licensing Committee

DATE: 8 July 2013



Hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire District Council area

Recommendation:

The committee is asked to consider the consultation responses set out in Appendix one and recommend Council whether to:

- a. allow drivers and operators to continue to set their own tariffs; or
- b. introduce a council set tariff and undertake a statutory consultation with the trade on structuring and setting the tariff.

Purpose of Report

1. To present the General Licensing Committee with a report to consider the results of the public consultation in order to decide whether the hackney carriage tariff should be set by individual operators or by South Oxfordshire District Council.

Strategic Objectives

2. Following the decision to implement the revised joint taxi licensing policy Council took the decision to undertake a further public consultation on the issue of the hackney carriage tariff to determine if it should continue to be set by individual operators and drivers or whether a council set tariff should be consulted upon and introduced.

Background

3. Following a standard procurement exercise through corporate strategy Insight Oxford were appointed as an independent and experienced company to undertake the consultation, analyse the data and produce a report. A joint working party of the councils' licensing, consultations, and communications teams worked with the consultants to produce the questionnaires and agree the methodology. The questionnaires were checked and approved by portfolio holders and chairmen of the general licensing committees from both councils. The questionnaires were designed to balance ease of completion against clarity and information on a very complex topic. There were separate provider surveys for South and Vale as the trades are statutorily separate and the questions posed were different. All drivers were individually written to twice and local trade associations were supported in encouraging their members to respond to the consultation. The public consultation was combined as hackney carriage users frequently travel from one district to the other and back again. The questionnaires were designed to be completed online either on a computer or a smartphone. The questionnaire was also available through the councils' consultation portal and paper copies were supplied upon request. The consultation lasted six weeks and ran from 15 April 2013 to 28 May 2013.
4. The consultants report is appendix one to this report. It includes all the questionnaires and associated documents.

Financial Implications

5. The taxi licensing budget is a cost recovery budget. The council is required to set fees at such a level as to recover its costs only. Some aspects of the costs of taxi licensing are excluded from this cost recovery so there will always be some cost borne by the council.
6. If Council decides to set a council set tariff and undertake a statutory consultation with the trade to structure and set a tariff this will entail additional work. A tariff could be in place for 1 April 2014 and this work can be undertaken within current resources

Legal Implications

7. The joint policy adopted in January 2013 was written to reflect current legislative requirements. All applications for licences under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and Town Police Clauses Act 1847 have to be made and determined in accordance with the councils' taxi licensing policy.

Risks

8. Failure to reflect the requirements of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and Town Police Clauses Act 1847 in the policy for hackney carriage and private hire could result in the council not complying with the legislation. Having a clear policy on the issue of hackney carriage tariffs helps to ensure compliance with the legislation.
9. The taxi trade services the population of the districts and beyond, taxi providers are also culturally diverse. The project team sought and took advice from the

equalities officer to ensure that consideration was given to facilitating access to the consultation for all interested parties. While all reasonable steps were taken to promote responses to the consultation there were significant variations in response rates.

Conclusion

10. The committee is recommended to consider the consultation responses set out in Appendix One and recommend Council whether to:
 - a. allow drivers and operators to continue to set their own tariffs; or
 - b. introduce a council set tariff and undertake a statutory consultation with the trade on structuring and setting the tariff.

Background Papers

None

Appendix 1

HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF CONSULTATION South Oxfordshire District Council

Research Report
JUNE 2013

PREPARED BY INSIGHT OXFORD (CONSULTING) LTD



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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Public Consultation Questionnaire
- Appendix B: South Providers' Consultation Questionnaire
- Appendix C: Email to South Oxfordshire Citizens' Panel
- Appendix D: Taxi Operator's Email to Customers
- Appendix E: South Oxfordshire District Council's Taxi Forum Invitation

1. BACKGROUND

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils (SODC and VWHDC) identified, through a stakeholder consultation on their overall taxi policy in 2012, that research was needed to understand specific factors relating to hackney carriage tariffs. The original consultation showed there to be divergent views relating to the following:

- The potential introduction of a council set hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire. Currently individual drivers and companies set their own tariffs.
- Whether to retain or remove the council set hackney carriage tariff that is already in place in The Vale and, if retained, whether it should be restructured.

To help inform their decision-making, SODC and VWHDC commissioned Insight Oxford to conduct independent research among members of the public and providers of taxi services. This report focuses on aspects of the consultation relation to South Oxfordshire and summarises the research objectives, methodology, key findings and conclusions. A separate report has been produced that focuses on issues relating to the Vale.

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this report:

Hackney carriage vehicle	HCV
Private hire vehicle	PHV
South Oxfordshire District Council	SODC
Vale of White Horse District Council	VWHDC

2. CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this consultation were to:

- Obtain a quantified snapshot of the extent to which relevant stakeholders (including users, potential users and providers of taxi services) support or oppose the introduction of a council set hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire.
- Gain an understanding of the views and concerns of the relevant stakeholders about the potential introduction of a council set hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire.

3. METHODOLOGY

The consultation on the potential introduction of a hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire was run at the same time as a very similar consultation in the Vale of White Horse. Overall this consultation included:

- A single public survey for users and potential users of HCVs including questions for South and Vale (referred to as the “public consultation” in this report).
- Two separate surveys for taxi providers in South Oxfordshire and the Vale (the former is referred to as the “South providers’ consultation” in this report).

Fieldwork ran for 6 weeks from 15/04/13 to 28/05/13. The survey questionnaires can be found in Appendices A and B.

The questionnaires for each survey were designed by Insight Oxford in partnership with the Council to ensure that appropriate questions and language were used. It was recognised that the subject matter from the public's perspective was complex. In particular, the need to distinguish between different types of taxis and understand the definition and relevance of tariffs in this context was a challenge. To help respondents distinguish between HCVs and PHVs the following definition of "hackney carriage vehicles" was provided:

"Taxis hailed from the street or taken from a taxi rank or pre-booked, they are usually found at a railway station, bus station or in town centres. They may be 'London' taxis or look like ordinary cars with a box or light on their roof showing the company name and the vehicle number"

The following information was also provided at the beginning of the survey:

*"This research **does not** relate to private hire vehicles (ordinary cars or minibuses with no roof box that can only do pre-booked journeys for pre-agreed fares)"*

An example of an existing tariff was provided (see Appendix A). Emphasis was placed on ensuring that the wording and explanations provided were as neutral and unbiased as possible.

Who was consulted?

Public consultation: The research population was defined as users and potential users of HCVs in South Oxfordshire. They did not, necessarily, need to be resident in South Oxfordshire as they could be working in or visiting the area from a neighbouring county or further afield. For this reason it was not possible to determine the size of the research population but a 'best estimate' approach was used drawing on population figures for South Oxfordshire and results from the National Travel Survey.

South Oxfordshire has a population of approximately 108,232 (Census 2011). As such it was calculated that achieving a total response rate of 383 would provide a good level of statistical robustness (95% confidence level and +/-5% confidence interval), while accepting that some respondents would live outside the district.

Results of the National Travel Survey (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts06-age-gender-and-modal-breakdown>) suggest that HCT usage is skewed toward those aged under 30. For this reason it was deemed important to target people in this age range as well as gathering views from other age groups.

South Providers' consultation: The target population was defined as all operators and drivers who provide taxi services in South Oxfordshire – of which there were a total of 808 at the time of the research.

How were they consulted?

Public consultation: Invitations to take part were sent out electronically and the consultation was widely advertised using posters and cards:

- The Council's communications team posted on Twitter and on the home page of the Council's website. They also displayed posters in public building including council offices and libraries. Small cards providing the link and a QR code to the survey were handed out by the on-street interviewers.
- An email was also sent to all 346 members of the Council's South Oxfordshire Citizens Panel.

During the course of the consultation the Council were informed that one of the larger taxi operators in the district had issued an email invitation to their customers encouraging them to take part in the survey – see Appendix D. It is not known how many people received the email nor if invitations to take part were issued by any other operators or organisations. However it is likely that this will have contributed to a substantial increase in the response rate around mid-May.

Data was captured on-line directly from respondents and via four sessions of on-street interviewing on both the South (Didcot and Henley) and the Vale (Wantage and Abingdon). A small number requested paper copies that were returned by post.

South Providers' consultation: Almost all the data was captured on-line directly from respondents. A small number requested paper copies that were returned by post and manually data entered.

Invitations to take part:

- SODC issued two postal mail shots during the consultation period informing all registered drivers and operators about the survey and encouraging them to take part (See Appendix E)
- SODC hold regular 'Taxi Forums' with drivers and operators at the district council offices. One such forum was held on 23/04/13 which provided the opportunity to ask questions about the consultation and to encourage everyone to take part. A representative from Insight Oxford attended.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

User, potential user and provider representation

- Results of the public consultation suggest that active users of HCVs in South Oxfordshire were well represented in this research (56%). However it is apparent that some of these 'users' actually used pre-booked taxis/executive cars and so it questionable whether these were HCVs.
- Some answered the survey on behalf their employer in that they were responsible for booking executive cars for local businesses. *This suggests that the sub-group of respondents identified as users of HCVs in South Oxfordshire is a 'mixed bag' of users of different types of taxis.

Use of HCVs and/or other types of taxi

- Frequency of use of HCVs in South Oxfordshire ranges from several times a week to once or twice a year (Graph 2, pg.8).
- By far the most popular use is going out for leisure (70%) while others use them for shopping, visiting friends and family, travel to and from work, medical appointments and onward journeys from train and bus trips. (Graph 3, pg.8).
- Business travel is also prominent but, in general, this tends to involve pre-booked executive cars that are not necessarily functioning as HCVs.
- There appears to be confusion, from the public's perspective, about the relevance of a hackney carriage tariff to different types of journey (hail, rank and pre-booked) and different types of vehicle (taxis/executive cars).

Views on who should set hackney carriage tariff

- There are divergent views about how hackney carriage tariffs are set, from users, potential users and providers of taxi services in South Oxfordshire
- The majority of users of HCV in South Oxfordshire, 63% (see caveat above *), would prefer an operator set tariff (Graph 4, pg.10) seeing this as important to ensure customer choice in relation to the quality, type of service and price they prefer. This was also felt to be important for maintaining and promoting competition and giving taxi operators the freedom to manage their own business without perceived interference of the council.
- The majority of non-users (55%) have a preference for a council set tariff (Graph 4, pg.10) and see this as necessary to ensuring consistency, control and fairness. Some also believe this will keep prices realistic and make taxis accessible to a wide range of the community.
- Comments demonstrated that there is some appetite to reach a 'happy medium' where a council set tariff operates for local journeys, made via hail and rank, while an operator set tariff is retained for pre-booked and longer journeys such as airport transfers.
- According to the consultation, the majority (62%) of providers of taxi services in South Oxfordshire would prefer to maintain operator set tariffs (Graph 6, pg.13)
- Of the 89 (out of 808) providers who responded to the South providers' consultation, almost 40% worked for a single taxi firm. This should be born in mind when considering these results.

Research limitations

Some responses to the public consultation, captured in the last two weeks of the fieldwork period could have been influenced by a request from one taxi operator, to their customers, to complete the survey in favour of an operator set tariff (see Appendix D). It is not known how many responses this could have generated but the sharp reversal in the data trends, away from a council set tariff and towards an operator set tariff, at this time may be explained by this.

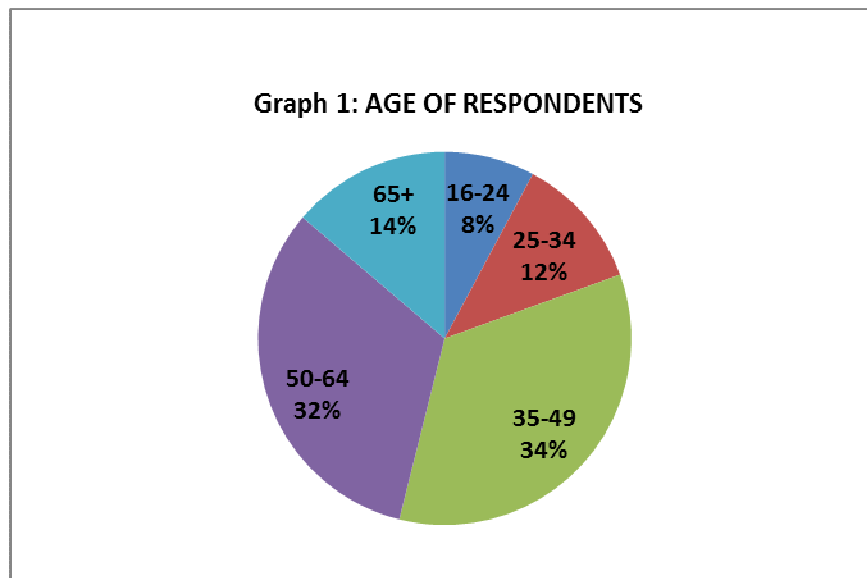
5. DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS

Profile of Respondents - Public Consultation

A total of 792 responses were received for the public consultation survey with a relatively even gender split – 53% male, 47% female.

10% of respondents said that they had a 'health problem or disability that had lasted or was expected to last 12 months or more' which is broadly in line with the population of Oxfordshire.

The age range of respondents was broad, with the largest proportion, 46%, sitting in the 35 to 64 bracket.



Users and non-users of HCVs

Respondents were asked “Do you, or are you ever likely to, use hackney carriages in the South Oxfordshire and/or Vale of White Horse district areas?” (see questionnaire in Appendix A).

The table below shows results for all respondents to the public consultation survey. Just over a third said they used HCVs just in South Oxfordshire with fewer, 17% saying they just used them in the Vale. A further 30% used HCVs in both districts.

Public consultation: Location of use of HCVs	% of all respondents to public consultation <i>(base size: 792)</i>
Use HCVs in South Oxfordshire only	35% (275)
Use HCVs in the Vale only	17% (136)
Use HCVs in both districts	30% (240)
Don't use/unlikely to use HCVs	18% (141)

Of the 18% who said they did not, and were unlikely, to use HCVs 92 explained why - 33% said they used their own car, 17% said they always pre-booked with a firm - a number of these mentioned a specific taxi operator- and 15% said they were too expensive. A further 13% said they use the bus and others said they walked, got a lift or cycled. Some said they used more than one other form of transport. The following are examples of some of the comments provided:

“Our company uses [named taxi operator] and taxis are pre-booked”

“I am a car driver and live in a village. Taxis therefore aren't easily available for short journeys; they only seem to be interested in airport trips etc.”

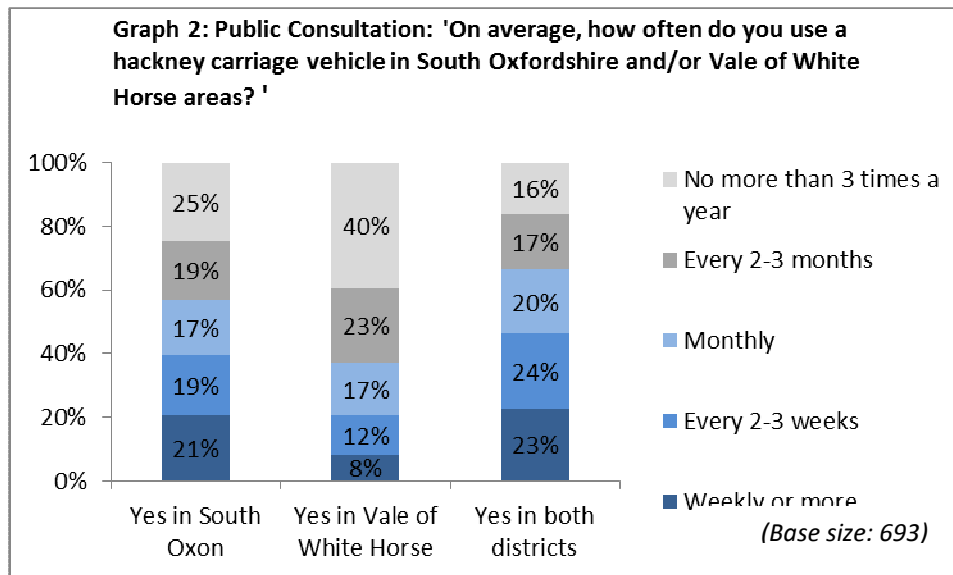
“Have a car and a bus pass”

“Suspect fares are overpriced”

“Own car is generally more convenient and cheaper”

Frequency of HCV use

When respondents were asked how often they used HCVs in South Oxfordshire and/or the Vale, answers varied widely from once a week or more to less than once a year. Graph 2 shows where, geographically, people said they used HCVs plotted against frequency of use:



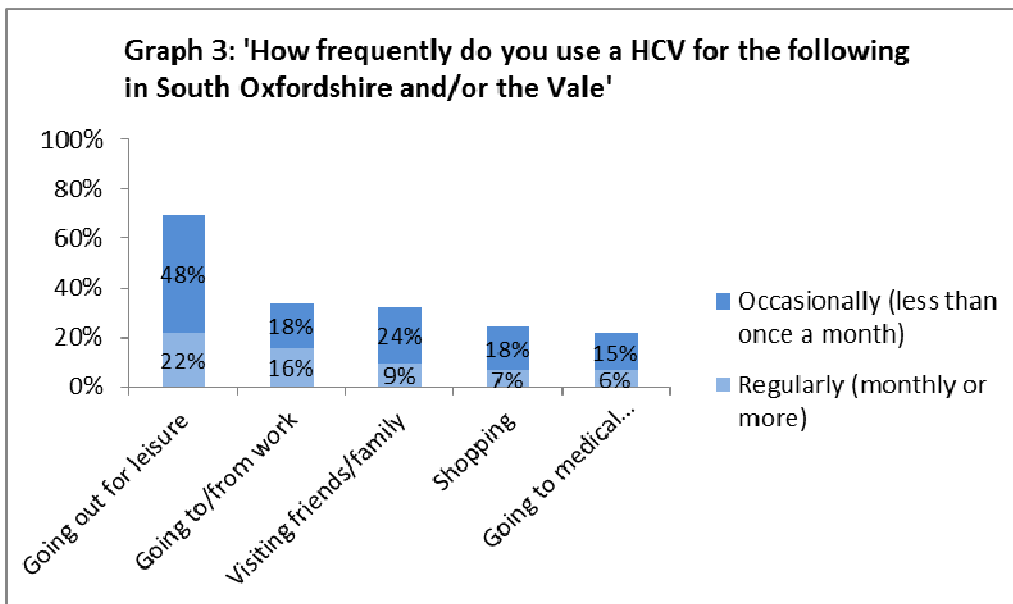
There appears to be a relatively even spread across the different frequencies of use for those who said they use HCVs exclusively in South Oxfordshire and those using them in both districts. There appear to be more frequent users in South Oxfordshire than in the Vale.

Purpose of HCV use

Respondents were asked how often, on average, they used HCVs for various purposes including getting to/from work, visiting friends or relatives, when out for leisure, shopping and going to medical appointments. They were also given the opportunity to provide any other purposes for which they used HCVs.

Overall, going out for leisure was by far the most common purpose for using a HCV with 70% of all respondents saying they used them regularly, i.e. monthly or more, or occasionally, i.e. less than once a month for this purpose.

Graph 3 provides a full summary of responses to this question:



The declared 'other' uses of HCVs were mixed and potentially indicated some confusion about vehicle types. Some mentioned uses more usual for HCVs (typically hailed or caught from a rank) such as travel from a train station or from an airport. Others mentioned uses that one might not necessarily associate with a HCV but would relate more to a pre-booked car or executive car journey such as business/corporate travel and travelling to an airport.

Main "Other" declared uses for HCVs	% of those declaring 'other' use (base size: 137)
Travel to/ from airport or port	47% (64)
Business/corporate travel	36% (49)
Travel to/ from train or bus station	26% (35)

Examples of some of the answers were as follows:

"I book taxis on behalf of my company travelling back and forth to the airports and ports"

"I organise taxis for business trips"

"I book taxis on behalf of my company travelling back and forth to the airports and ports"

"Company bookings for visitors to business in Abingdon"

"I do not book them for my use but in a professional capacity for business trips"

"Trips to stations (bus/train) for work/non-work typically"

"To and from Heathrow airport and to and from Didcot Station"

"Frequent use to go to the London Airports"

Profile of Respondents - South Providers' Consultation

93 responses were received. This represents a 12% response rate from a total of 808 licensed providers in South Oxfordshire. All respondents confirmed that they were a driver or taxi operator

licensed by SODC. This information was verified by them providing a valid ‘badge number’, their name and the firm that they worked for.

34% (31) of respondents said they owned or part-owned a taxi firm that provides hackney carriage services. 22% (20) confirmed that they were licensed private hire operators. 3% (3) said they were a representative of a trade association.

When asked ‘What firm do you currently drive for?’ 32 individual firms were mentioned with the majority represented by 1 or 2 respondents. There were 4 firms that were exceptions to this being represented by more than 2 respondents:

Firm (all with more than 2 responses)	% total respondents (base size: 93)
Firm A	39% (36)
Firm B	9% (8)
Firm C	7% (6)
Firm D	3% (3)

4 respondents declared themselves “self-employed” or “owner-driver”.

Views on who should set hackney carriage tariffs - Public Consultation

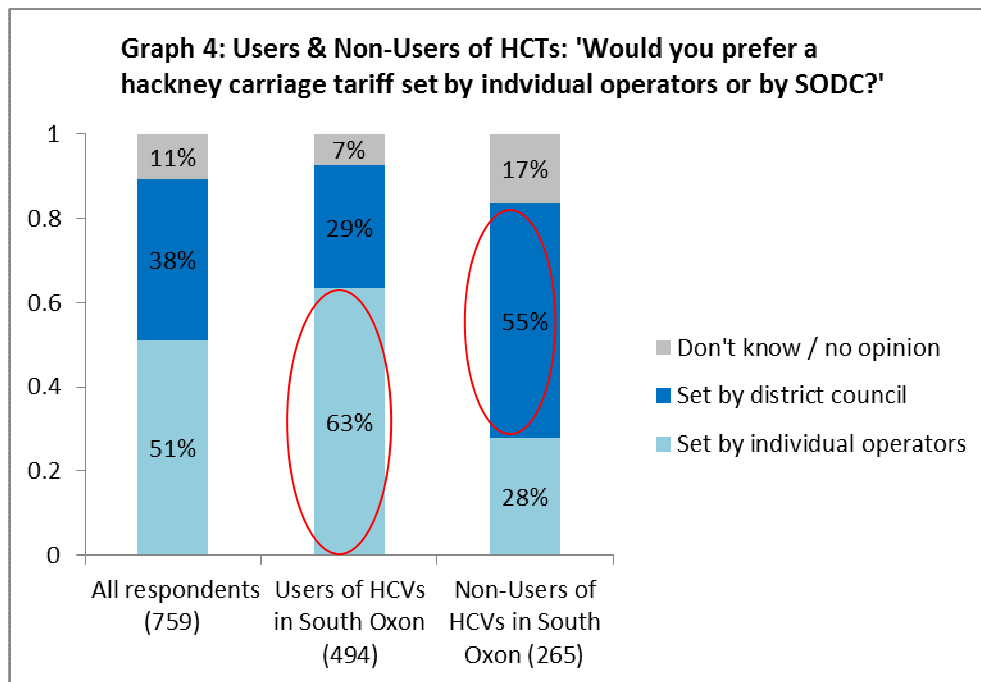
Respondents were asked ‘Would you prefer a hackney carriage tariff set by individual operators or by SODC?’ Answer options were as follows:

- Set by individual operators
- Set by district council
- Don’t know / no opinion

The responses were analysed to provide a comparison of the following:

- All respondents –users and non-users of HCVs in South Oxfordshire
- Users of HCVs in South Oxfordshire
- Non-users of HCVs

The results are summarised in Graph 4 below. This shows that just over half of all respondents had a preference for the tariff being set by individual operators. Looking at the results split into users and non-users, it is clear that the majority (63%) of those who said they use HCVs in South Oxfordshire had a preference towards an operator set tariff. Conversely, the majority (55%) of non-users had a preference for a council set tariff.



Respondents were also invited to provide a comment to explain their answer. These reflected a number of key themes.

Those in support of an operator set tariff:

A number of respondents perceived that an operator set tariff would help to support healthy competition:

“Ensures quality and service are key drivers of competition, rather than having solely price as the key competition driver”

“A fixed tariff does not encourage providers to be competitive. It leads to monopoly and complacency. In South Oxfordshire there are two large companies - [named taxi operators] - who are constantly kept on their toes by competition.”

Others saw the introduction of a council set hackney carriage tariff resulting in companies that provide higher end taxi services, needing to reduce the quality of their vehicles and services:

“The company I work for chooses to pay a higher price for a better quality of service and our provider would not be able to provide the superior service we demand if they were forced to adhere to set tariffs.”

A number of respondents underlined the importance of having the option of using an operator that provided a higher-end service at an appropriate price and saw their choice being taken away by the introduction of a council set tariff:

“I like having the opportunity to pay a higher fare for executive business travel when arranging transport for clients. Those companies in this market segment earn their reputation based on high quality service, luxury cars and professionalism. But it comes at a price. If you were to cap their prices- you would be capping the success and quality of taxi services we currently have available in South Oxfordshire.”

“When I use a taxi service I like to treat myself and my potential customers to an executive service. I strongly believe that having a fixed tariff will have a drastic effect on the quality of vehicles and possible drivers that I wish to use.”

Some of those who supported the idea of an operator set tariff did suggest the need for some caveats to help provide some guidance and/or control for example:

"... however there should be a maximum allowable charge set by the district council."

Those in support of a council-set tariff:

The main themes that emerged for those supporting a council-set tariff were the need for consistency and transparency:

"Some taxi firms in South Oxfordshire (Particularly [named taxi operator]) charge excessive tariffs, and the same journey can cost different amounts each time you travel."

"I use taxis twice a day and find that two taxi companies charge a difference of £20 for the same journey ... I am forced to use a smaller company that is less reliable as they are so much cheaper. I think if the tariffs were more guided by the council then the less reliable companies would have to up their game to stay in business."

"Didcot taxis are a rip-off when compared to Oxford and even London. I feel there is no moderation towards sensible pricing in the Didcot area. The council should work with the taxi companies in the first instance and then regulate if no way forward can be found."

Others were concerned about prices being influenced too heavily by the desire to maximise profits rather than keep them affordable for different groups of the community:

"If left in the hands of the operator, profit and greed would come before what's fair and appropriate to charge for using a service licensed by the council."

"There should be guidelines in place to protect users, particularly vulnerable users or those who rely on taxis for mobility (e.g. blind or partially sighted people)."

"Surely it would be ridiculous if the individual operators set the tariff - prices would spiral out of control."

Distinguishing between hackney carriage vehicles and pre-booked/executive cars

Comments from a number of respondents, with a mix of preferences regarding who sets tariffs, indicated that they wanted a 'middle ground' with a distinction made between hackney carriage vehicles and executive cars. Also, between how prices are set for short, local trips via hail and rank and longer trips (e.g. to airports) via pre-booked cars.

"For pre-booked taxis I think the tariff should be set by the operator (as there is the chance to discuss/negotiate a price beforehand). For roadside hailed taxis the council should set the maximum tariff" (Supported Council set tariff)

"My opinion is mixed: If you are dealing with local fares or pick up a taxi from a rank then it is good to know the fares are capped. This surely can't apply for long-distance hire which is usually pre-booked (e.g. Heathrow) and therefore outside of district council jurisdiction." (Supported operator set tariff)

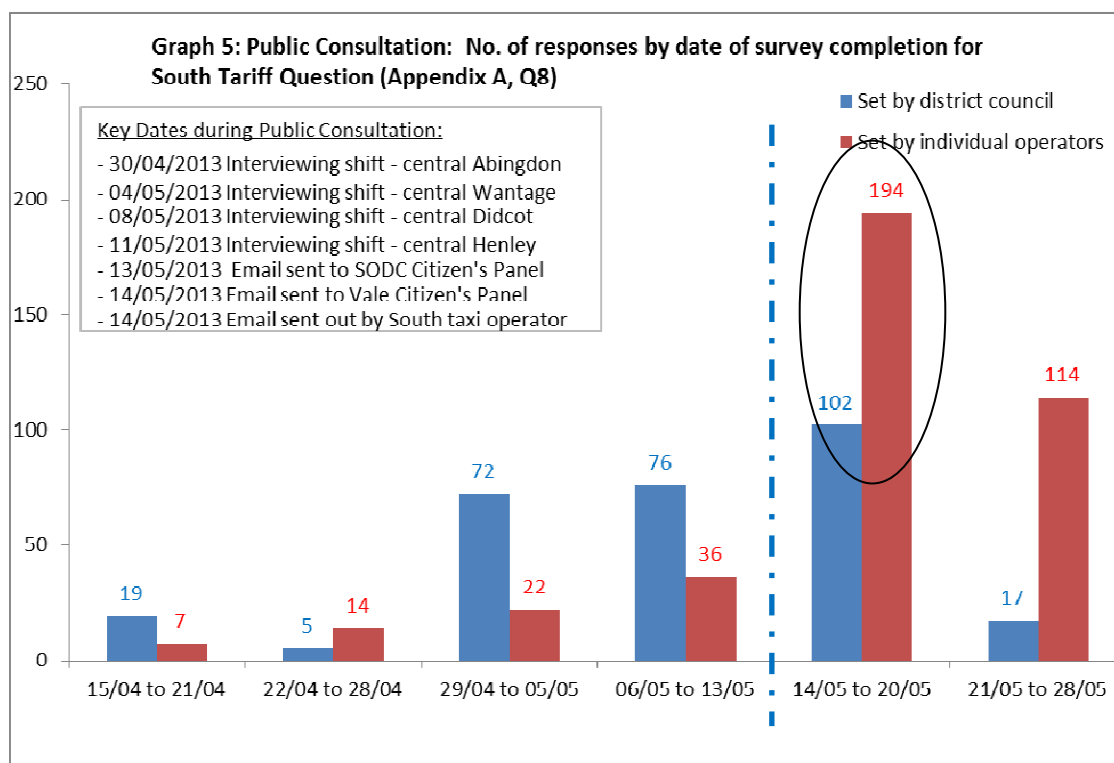
"It is a shame that both are not an option. For certain journeys a certain type of luxury and minimum standard is required. Whereas a local journey of say less than 5 miles, this is less

important. The passenger is less likely to require a Mercedes to travel from pub to home. Suggest that [named taxi operator] should run a 'Local service', where the tariffs are set by the Council and an 'Executive service' - where the existing business model, tariff set by competing companies, is maintained. This ensures quality and type of service can be chosen by the customer and not by a tariff driving down the incentive of the company to provide an executive style of service" (Supported operator set tariff)

"I agree that a maximum tariff should be set by the district council for instances where service is provided through hailing on the street or the taxi rank. In these instances the public are not able to choose provider due to immediate availability or through the process of queuing. In the instance a member of the public chooses to pre-book a service, here the individual operator may use decide to differentiate their offer, e.g. better cars, better of service. Under these circumstances, where the public are informed on their choice, the operator should have the ability to set their own tariff, thus making a competitive market place." (Supported operator set tariff)

Dates of responses and associated trends

Graph 5 below shows the number of respondents expressing a preference for a council set tariff (blue) compared with those preferring an operator set tariff (red) for 7 day intervals across the fieldwork period.



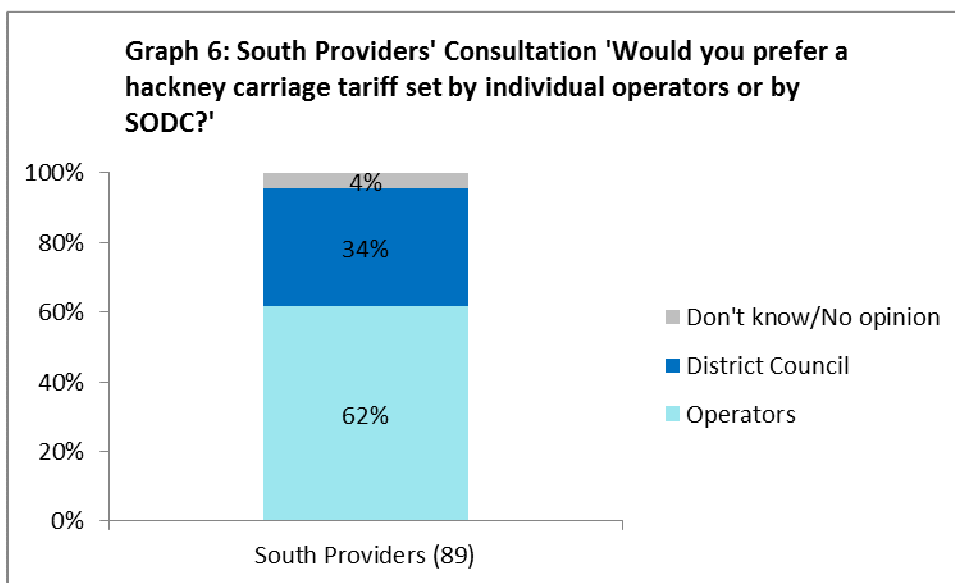
It is evident from Graph 5 that a notable change in the proportion of answers for each option after 13/05. From 15/04 to 13/05 more respondents expressed a preference for a council set tariff. From 14/05 onwards this trend sharply reversed with proportionally more respondents expressing a preference for an operator set tariff.

The key dates provided, in Graph 5 show that an email was sent out by an individual taxi operator on 14/05 (Appendix D) - the same day the response trends reversed. It should be noted that an email

was also issued on 13/05, as part of the planned consultation activity, to the SODC’s Citizen’s Panel (Appendix C). It is suggested that the email sent out by the individual operator is more likely to have prompted the boost in support for an operator-set tariff, given that it clearly asked recipients to express this preference while the Citizen’s Panel email did not.

Views on who should set hackney carriage tariffs - South Providers’ Consultation

As in the Public Consultation, the South Providers’ Consultation asked respondents “Would you prefer a hackney carriage tariff set by individual operators or by South Oxfordshire District Council? (see Appendix B). Of the 89 respondents who answered a notable majority - 62% (55) - had a preference for the tariff being set by individual operators. 34% (30) were in favour of a tariff set by the district council. 5% (4) answered ‘don’t know / no opinion’. These results are summarised in Graph 6 below.



Again, respondents were invited to provide a comment to help explain their answer.

In support of a council set tariff

Most mentioned the value of having consistency of pricing and/or ensuring fairness for the customer:

“I think it’s best if the council decides on the tariff as it would be better for the public to have a uniform tariff to avoid dispute.”

“I think the council should decide the tariff as this will eliminate any arguments among the drivers and customers.”

Some linked the subject of tariffs to that of whether there should be meters in taxis:

“I don't think there should a meter. But if the meter is going to be used then the council should set the tariff because I believe the tariff rate should be fixed for every one as this will eliminate confusion for the customer.”

In support of an operator set tariff

Some providers were concerned that a council set tariff would have a negative impact on their profitability:

“Historically any increases in council-set tariffs lag significantly behind any real-life increases in costs. This would impact owners' profitability and therefore reduce the funds available for wages, vehicle purchases and maintenance etc., standards of staff and vehicles and especially levels of staffing would slip in this area where the minimum wage is not sufficient to attract staff.”

Others perceived that an operator set tariff was necessary to maintain and promote choice for the customer:

“By allowing individual operators to set their own tariffs I believe the customer is better served and given greater variety.”

And others articulated that the maintenance of an operator set tariff was necessary to promote healthy competition:

“Currently South Oxfordshire taxi users benefit from good competition on quality and price from a number of different providers. This is due to the free market that SODC has adopted and should remain so.”

6. CONTACT DETAILS

For further information please contact:

Louise Wheeler

Landline: 01865 596771

Mobile: 0778 6925969

Email: louise.wheeler@insightoxford.co.uk

Appendix A
Public Consultation Questionnaire



HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF RESEARCH - SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE AND VALE OF WHITE HORSE USERS' SURVEY 2013

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have commissioned Insight Oxford to conduct independent research to gauge the level of support among taxi users, and potential taxi users, for possible changes to the way prices are set for hackney carriages. This price is known as the tariff.

(The findings will directly inform decisions made by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils about the future of hackney carriage tariffs. The consultation runs from 15/04/13 to 28/05/13 and also involves obtaining relevant views from providers of hackney carriage services in both districts.

The data will be collected, managed and reported by Insight Oxford who fully adhere to the Market Research Society's code of conduct and will ensure that the anonymity of all respondents is preserved.

If you take part in the survey you will have the opportunity to be entered into a free prize draw to WIN £50 worth of vouchers from a store of your choice)

SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU

1.	What is your age?	16-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	Under 16	Thanks for your time. You need to be over 16 to take part in this survey. (Go to end)				

2.	<p>Do you, or are you ever likely to, use hackney carriages in the South Oxfordshire and/or Vale of White Horse district areas?</p> <p><i>By "hackney carriage" we mean taxis hailed from the street or taken from a taxi rank or pre-booked, they are usually found at a railway station, bus station or in town centres. They may be 'London' taxis or look like ordinary cars with a box or light on their roof showing the company name and the vehicle number</i></p>				
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">Yes in South Oxfordshire - includes Didcot, Wallingford, Thame & Henley</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Yes in Vale of White Horse includes Abingdon, Wantage, Botley & Faringdon</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Yes in both districts</td> <td style="width: 25%;">No</td> </tr> </table>	Yes in South Oxfordshire - includes Didcot, Wallingford, Thame & Henley	Yes in Vale of White Horse includes Abingdon, Wantage, Botley & Faringdon	Yes in both districts	No
Yes in South Oxfordshire - includes Didcot, Wallingford, Thame & Henley	Yes in Vale of White Horse includes Abingdon, Wantage, Botley & Faringdon	Yes in both districts	No		

3.	If No please say why you don't use hackney carriages?
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4.	<p>Would you like to be entered into the free prize draw with the chance of winning a £50 voucher from a store of your choice?</p> <p><i>If YES we need you to provide your contact details so that we can reach you if you win. These details will not be used for any other reason and results will remain anonymous (The draw will take place no later than 18/06/13)</i></p>	Yes	No (Go to Q8)
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Appendix A continued



5.	Your name	
6.	Your contact 'phone number	
7.	Your email address	

Information about Hackney carriage tariffs:

We are going to ask your opinion about who should set hackney carriage tariffs to control fares - first about South Oxfordshire, then about Vale of White Horse.

Councils can set tariffs to ensure that all hackney carriage vehicles that are licensed in their area (when hailed, hired from a rank or pre-booked) charge consistent fares to customers. The tariff acts by setting maximum fare rates according to a range of factors including time of day or night and special occasions such as Bank Holidays. Taxi operators may charge less than the council set tariff but must not exceed it.

This example tariff (show example) is the one currently in place in Vale of White Horse. This research does not focus on the level of fares contained in tariff(s) but who they should be set by.

SECTION 2: SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF

Includes: DIDCOT, WALLINGFORD, THAME, HENLEY

Currently hackney carriage operators in South Oxfordshire set their own individual tariffs.

8.	In South Oxfordshire, would you prefer a hackney carriage tariff set by individual operators or by the district council?	Set by individual operators	Set by district council	Don't know/no opinion
Please comment to help explain your answer if you wish:				

Appendix A continued



SECTION 3: VALE OF WHITE HORSE HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF

Includes: ABINGDON, WANTAGE, BOTLEY, FARINGDON

The Vale of White Horse District Council has a council set hackney carriage tariff (show example). The council would like to know your views on whether this should be kept or removed. If the tariff is removed hackney carriage operators would set their own individual tariffs.

9. In the Vale of White Horse, do you think that the council should / should not retain its set tariff?			
Yes, retain current council set tariff without changes (please comment below)	Yes retain the tariff but with changes (please comment on your preferred changes)	No, remove the tariff (please comment below)	Don't know/no opinion
Please comment to help explain your answer if you wish:			

SECTION 4: MORE ABOUT YOU

So that we can understand the preference of different groups of residents, it would be very useful if you could tell us a bit about yourself:


10. Are you male or female?	Male	Female
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11. Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more? Please include problems related to old age	Yes	No
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12. On average, how often do you use a hackney carriage vehicle in South Oxfordshire and/or Vale of White Horse areas?	5 times a week or more	1-4 times a week	Every 2-3 weeks	Monthly	Every 2-3 months	1-3 times per year	Less than once a year
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13. How frequently do you use a hackney carriage vehicle for the following South Oxfordshire and/or Vale of White Horse district areas?			
To get to/from place of work	Regularly (once a month or more)	Occasionally (less than once a month)	Never
Visiting friends or relatives	Regularly (once a month or more)	Occasionally (less than once a month)	Never
When out for leisure	Regularly (once a month or more)	Occasionally (less than once a month)	Never
Shopping	Regularly (once a month or more)	Occasionally (less than once a month)	Never
Going to medical appointments	Regularly (once a month or more)	Occasionally (less than once a month)	Never
Other (please specify)	Regularly (once a month or more)	Occasionally (less than once a month)	Never

Appendix A continued

HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF ONE		TARIFF TWO
 <p>(ALL TIMES EXCEPT AS SHOWN IN TARIFF TWO)</p>		<p>(a) Public Holidays 10.00 pm on evening preceding Public Holiday until 6.00 am on morning following Public Holiday</p> <p>(b) All journeys on all other days commencing after midnight and before 6.00 am</p>
<p>Any Complaints should be notified to Vale of White Horse D.C Abbey House, Abingdon quoting the plate no. if Possible</p> <p>TABLE OF MAXIMUM FARES EFFECTIVE FROM 1st January, 2012</p> <p>All charges are inclusive of V.A.T. where applicable</p> <p>No extra for wheelchair use</p>	<p>(a) DISTANCE NOT EXCEEDING 7 TENTHS OF A MILE OR 1127 METRES (APPROX) For the whole distance £3.50</p> <p>(b) DISTANCE EXCEEDING SEVEN TENTHS OF A MILE OR 1127 METRES (APPROX) For the first seven tenths or 1127 metres (approx) £3.50 AND For each subsequent one tenth of a mile or 161 Metres (approx) or part thereof £0.20</p> <p>(c) WAITING TIME: For each period of one minute or part thereof £0.20</p> <p>(d) SOILING CHARGE - Maximum £75.00 to cover the cleaning and loss of income where the interior of the vehicle is soiled due to excessive alcohol etc, or by the carriage of animals (except guide dogs)</p>	<p>(a) DISTANCE NOT EXCEEDING 7 TENTHS OF A MILE OR 1127 METERS (APPROX) For the whole distance £4.65</p> <p>(b) DISTANCE EXCEEDING SEVEN TENTHS OF A MILE OR 1127 METRES (APPROX) For the first seven tenths or 1127 metres (approx) £4.65 AND For each subsequent one tenth of a mile or 161 Metres (approx) or part thereof £ 0.30</p> <p>(c) WAITING TIME: For each period of one minute or part thereof £0.30</p> <p>(d) SOILING CHARGE - Maximum £75.00 to cover the cleaning and loss of income where the interior of the vehicle is soiled due to excessive alcohol etc, or by the carriage of animals (except guide dogs)</p>

[Appendix B](#)
[South Providers' Consultation Questionnaire](#)



HAVE YOUR SAY about
hackney carriage tariffs in
your area

HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF RESEARCH – SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE PROVIDERS' SURVEY 2013

South Oxfordshire District Council has commissioned Insight Oxford to conduct independent research to gauge the level of support amongst taxi providers for potential changes to the way prices are set for hackney carriages. The research **does not** relate to private hire vehicles (ordinary cars or minibuses with no roof box that can only do pre-booked journeys for pre-agreed fares).

This consultation, which runs from 15/04/13 to 28/05/13, also involves obtaining relevant views from users, and potential users, of hackney carriage services in South Oxfordshire. The findings will directly inform decisions made by South Oxfordshire District Council about the future of hackney carriage tariffs.

The data will be collected, managed and reported by Insight Oxford who fully adhere to the Market Research Society's code of conduct and will ensure that the anonymity of all respondents is preserved.

You can complete this survey on-line via this URL <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HCTSOUTHPROVIDERSLIVE>

This can also be accessed using this QR Code:



It is very short and will take **just a few minutes** to complete.

Each respondent is eligible to complete the survey ONCE only.

If you have a strong preference for completing a paper copy of the survey (instead of the on-line version) please contact Louise Wheeler on 01865 596771 or email louise.wheeler@insightoxford.co.uk

Please also use these contact details if you require any further information about the research.

Thanks, in advance, for taking the time to have your say

Appendix B continued



HAVE YOUR SAY about
hackney carriage tariffs in
your area

SECTION 1: YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Only certain people are eligible to provide responses to this survey i.e. those involved in the provision of taxi services in South Oxfordshire District Council area. For this reason, we need to collect some important information to allow us to verify your eligibility to take part. We will not pass this on to anyone else and all results will be reported anonymously.

1.	Are you a private hire/hackney carriage driver or taxi operator licensed by South Oxfordshire District Council? If NO, thanks for your time, this survey is only relevant to those who operate out of South Oxfordshire District Council. (go to end of survey)	Yes	No
2.	If Yes, what is your driver's badge number? _____		
3.	What is your name? _____		
4.	What firm do you currently drive for? If you don't currently drive a taxi please answer N/A _____		
5.	Do you own or part-own a taxi firm that provides hackney carriage services? If YES, please tell us which firm _____	Yes	No
6.	Are you a licensed private hire operator? If YES, please tell us which firm _____	Yes	No
7.	Are you a representative of a relevant trade association? If YES, please tell us which one _____	Yes	No
8.	If Yes, how many members do you represent? _____		

Appendix B continued



HAVE YOUR SAY about hackney carriage tariffs in your area

SECTION 2: HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFFS

We are going to ask your opinion about who should set the hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire. An example tariff template is provided below. Currently hackney carriage operators set their own individual tariffs.

Please note that this research is not intended to focus on the level of fares contained in tariff(s) but who they should be set by. If a council set tariff were to be introduced the council would be legally obliged to consult with the trade before setting the tariff.

9.	Would you prefer a hackney carriage tariff set by individual operators or by South Oxfordshire District Council?	Set by individual operators	Set by district council	Don't know/no opinion
Please comment to help explain your answer if you wish:				

SECTION 3: ABOUT YOU

So that we can understand the preference of different groups of hackney carriage providers, it would be very useful if you could tell us a bit about yourself:

10.	Are you male or female?	Male	Female
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11.	What is your age?	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
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Thank you for having your say!

Appendix B continued



HAVE YOUR SAY about
hackney carriage tariffs in
your area

Example Hackney Carriage Tariff Template

Structured Tariff					
For any journey inclusive of VAT (if applicable) For journeys starting:	Vehicles up to 4 seats			Vehicles with more than 4 seats carrying 5 or more passengers	
	06:00 – 22:59	Tariff 1			Tariff 2
23:00 - 01:59	Tariff 2			Tariff 4	
And all day on Sundays, Bank Holidays, Public Holidays & Easter Sunday and 20:00 - 23:59 Christmas Eve & New Year's Eve					
02:00 – 05:59	Tariff 3			Tariff 5	
And all day Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Year's Day. Henley Regatta and Festival					
	Tariff 1	Tariff 2	Tariff 3	Tariff 4	Tariff 5
Flag fall					
Inclusive 1/10's mile					
Subsequent 176 yd or 161 m (1/10 mile)					
Waiting time per minute or part thereof					
Soiling Charge £75					

[Appendix C](#)
[Email to South Oxfordshire Citizens' Panel](#)

South Oxfordshire Taxi Tariffs - User Survey 2013

As a valued member of South Oxfordshire District Council's Citizens' Panel we are inviting you, on their behalf, to take part in an important consultation about taxi tariffs.

If you take part in the survey you will have the opportunity to be entered into a free prize draw to WIN £50 worth of vouchers from a high street store of your choice.

South Oxfordshire District Council have commissioned Insight Oxford to conduct independent research to gauge the level of support among taxi users and potential users for possible changes to the way prices are set for hackney carriage vehicles. This price is known as the tariff.

Hackney carriage vehicles are those taxis that can be hailed from the street, taken from taxi ranks or pre-booked. They may be 'London' taxis or look like ordinary cars with a box or light on their roof showing the company name and the vehicle number. This research does not relate to private hire vehicles (ordinary cars or minibuses with no roof box that can only do pre-booked journeys for pre-agreed fares).

What Happens Next?

The data will be collected, managed and reported by Insight Oxford. We fully adhere to the Market Research Society's code of conduct and will ensure that the anonymity of all respondents is preserved.

The findings will directly inform decisions made by South Oxfordshire District Council about the future of hackney carriage tariffs.

** How To Take Part

You have until 5pm on 28th May 2013 to take part.

You can complete the survey on-line via this URL:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/hctusersurveylive>

Or go to this link and you can use the QR code to access the survey via your Smartphone or tablet:

[https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal/southandvale/legal_and_democratic_services/lic/taxi tariff_users](https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal/southandvale/legal_and_democratic_services/lic/taxi_tariff_users)

The survey is very short and will take just a few minutes to complete.

If you have a strong preference for completing a paper copy of the survey (instead of the on-line version) please contact Louise Wheeler at Insight Oxford to request one.

01865 596771

louise.wheeler@insightoxford.co.uk

It will need to be posted back to us by 25th May 2013.

To complete this survey you must be at least 16 years of age. Each respondent is eligible to complete the survey ONCE only.

Thanks, in advance, for taking the time to have your say!

[Appendix D](#)
[Taxi Operator's Email to Customers](#)

>>> "[name of taxi operator]> 14/05/2013 16:33 >>>

Dear [name of recipient]

[name of taxi operator] need a few minutes of your time please!

This is very important for [name of taxi operator].

South Oxfordshire District Council are currently in the process of unifying their Taxi Policy with Vale of White Horse District Council. A key difference between the two councils current policy is tariff control.

South Oxfordshire has always in the past allowed the local operators to set their own tariffs. This has seen the development of several good service providers competing for custom on price and quality.

Vale has always taken the opposite approach with Councillors setting tariffs and dictating to taxi companies the maximum that they can charge for a journey. This can result in low service levels and very little competition between operators.

The officers of the two Councils are currently consulting with the public on whether they should follow their chosen path of introducing tariff control in South Oxfordshire, to match that in the Vale.

This would have a dramatic effect on the service [name of taxi operator] are able to offer, the quality of our vehicles and the employed status of our drivers.

Please can you take just a few minutes to answer a short survey and support our view that it is best for taxi users if taxi companies can compete freely on price and service?

The survey can be found at the following link:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/hctusersurveylive>

We would greatly appreciate your support and would be delighted if you passed this message on.

[name of taxi operator]

[\[website of taxi operator\]](#)

[Appendix E](#)
[South Oxfordshire District Council's Taxi Forum Invitation](#)

Dear Driver/Operator,

TAXI FORUM:

Tuesday 23 April 2013, 12:00 to 14:00, Council Chamber, South Oxfordshire District Council Offices, Crowmarsh Gifford

The consultation on hackney carriage tariffs started on the 15 April 2013 and runs until 28 May 2013.

The Council is using Insight Oxford, an independent company, to run the consultation. One of their team will be at the taxi forum to explain how the consultation will work and how you can have your say as a member of the taxi trade.

To take part in the survey online, please visit the link below between the 15 April and the 28 May 2013. You may wish to respond to the consultation after the forum. However, please note that you can only enter the survey once.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HCTSOUTHPROVIDERSLIVE>

This can also be accessed on a smartphone or tablet using this QR Code:



You will need your badge number to complete the survey.

If you have a strong preference for completing a paper copy of the survey please contact Louise Wheeler, Insight Oxford on 01865 596771 or email louise.wheeler@insightoxford.co.uk

The survey closes on the 28 May 2013 at 17:00.

The Licensing Committee will consider the results of the consultation early in July. The date of the Licensing Committee meeting will be set after the Council elections on 2 May. It is our intention to take a recommendation from the Licensing Committee to full Council on the 18 July 2013.

Please check the Council's website at:
<http://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=126>
for final dates and times of committee meetings after 7 June 2013.

Yours faithfully

Robert Draper
Shared Team Leader Licensing

Appendix E continued

Taxi Forum



AGENDA

Tuesday 23 April 2013, 12:00 am – 14:00 pm

Council Chamber, SODC Council Offices, Crowmarsh Gifford

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Presentation on taxi tariff consultation
3. Issues arising from new policy
4. Questions and answers
5. Finish 14:00 prompt

Notes: