

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME****Question 1**

The following question has been received from Rashid Hanif:

“What is the Council's response to the following statement: The Hackney Carriage rank in the middle of Ilkley used to be right outside the railway station, but many years ago it was moved to Brook Street. Here, there are two spaces, supplemented by others round the corner in Railway Road. However the Brook Street rank is not fit for purpose in that it is affected by a lot of street furniture near the pavement edge. This means that taxi doors are frequently damaged when opened by intending passengers. Moreover, if drivers park away (say, half a metre) from the kerb, then intending passengers frequently injure themselves when coping with this configuration, as well as with the danger caused by roadside gullies. Also, it is not unknown for drivers to be fined by Parking Wardens for parking away from the kerb. What is needed, VERY URGENTLY, is for the Council to re-instate the Hackney Carriage rank right outside the railway station. The vast majority towns and cities in the UK have taxi ranks immediately outside their railway stations, for the benefit of arriving passengers. Ilkley should NOT be an exception. It would be a great improvement, and for the benefit of everybody to have a station taxi rank in Ilkley.”

**Response from the Leader of Council**

The movement of hackney carriage Ranks is a routine matter which is carried out via consultation between hackney carriage trade representatives and the hackney carriage and private hire (HCPH) department. Trade representatives and officers work closely to monitor and respond to public demand for hackney carriages as such locations change as areas are developed. The HCPH department confirms that the Rank at Ilkley railway station was moved at the request of the trade in circa 1995. As the station forecourt is private and not under council ownership/control, bringing the Hackney Carriage stand back to its original position on the station forecourt is challenging. The Council has attempted to bring back Hackney Carriage stands at Keighley and Shipley rail stations during the last three years and to date has not been successful. This is once again primarily due to the forecourt being private and not highway. I will ask officers to engage Network Rail and Ilkley Station on the possibility of returning the stand to the forecourt.

With regard to Brook Street, I have contacted Parking Services and there is no evidence of Taxis receiving PCNs at this location. With regard to the issues around street furniture, I will instruct officers to examine the nature of the street furniture and the gullies to determine suitability with a view to making improvements if necessary.

## **Question 2**

The following question has been received from Shabir Ahmed:

“What is the Council’s response to the following statement: “As a Hackney Carriage driver, I represent Keighley and Bradford Taxi Drivers’ Association, and we do not like the way in which the Council is insisting that all Hackney Carriages have to be wheelchair accessible. We do not believe the Council when it indicates that this is in compliance with an EU law which is, or is about to be, in force. The Council, yes, has to provide public hire for the needs of wheelchair users, BUT it is totally ignoring the well-known fact that the vast majority of able-bodied people do not like using wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriages. Instead, they prefer to use private hire vehicles, which are of course “normal” cars. This is having an increasingly detrimental and significant effect on our livelihood. A balance has to be struck, BUT we want the Council to get the right balance, give the general public a proper choice of what kind of Hackney Carriage they wish to travel in, and stop discriminating against residents and Hackney Carriage drivers?”

### **Response from the Leader of Council**

In August 2005 a report to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee was produced in response to an Office of Fair Trading report to the Government. The report suggested that Licensing Authorities which maintained a policy of restricting the number of licensed taxis should, in the public interest, reconsider their position regarding the number of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) licensed as taxis and should de-limit the taxi numbers where possible. At the same meeting the Unmet Demand Survey carried out in 2003 was referred to as it highlighted a lack of WAVs, with Bradford having only 4.9% (compared to 34% in Leeds).

At the 2005 meeting, the Hackney Carriage Owners Association agreed to convert 10 saloon vehicles to WAVs per annum in years 2005 to 2009. From January 2010 no further saloon vehicles would be licensed. Later that year, in November 2005, a fresh resolution stated that for every plate not exchanged for a WAV, an additional plate would be issued.

A report was presented and a resolution was made by the Regulatory and Appeals Committee dated 29th October 2008: - “That the Assistant Director Waste and Street Scene be authorised to bring forward the date by which all newly registered hackney carriages will be required to be wheelchair accessible to 1st January 2009, and that this Committee welcomes the commitment of the Bradford Hackney Carriage Association in giving support to this action “ the reasons for this resolution were based on:

- Insufficient vehicles had been voluntarily changed to WAV
- A report and petition to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee carried out in 2006 “What’s it really like” from Bradford Action Forum, Disabled Peoples Forum asked the Committee to take serious steps to address the issue of there being “a significant lack of Wheelchair Assessable Vehicles”

- The Unmet Demand Survey in November 2007 found there was a marked lack of WAVs.

Following the resolution of October 2008, the taxis trade exchanged saloon vehicles to WAVs at the end their licensing life. There was a challenge to this process via a petition received December 2010 objecting to the process and stated the current poor financial climate as a reason. The points were considered and views were sought from the existing majority Hackney Carriage Association. The Association did not support the petition and wished to continue with the current arrangement.

Currently there are 222 licensed hackney carriage vehicles, 218 of these are WAV and 4 are not. There is no evidence that members of the public are discriminated against by WAVs as there are many vehicle variants offering a choice of vehicle type. Many people with walking and movement difficulty prefer a vehicle that can be accessed without having to lower themselves on to a low level seat. The Council works closely with Groups which represent disabled customers to both promote and ensure equality, any move to reduce the number of WAV Taxis would be contrary to this.