

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

10 MARCH 2022

SATISFACTION SURVEYS FOR TAXI USERS AND THE TAXI TRADE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on the completion of the satisfaction surveys that were carried out from customers using taxis within Newark & Sherwood and from the taxi trade.

2.0 Background

2.1 At the General Purposes Committee meeting on 2 September 2021, Members agreed for the licensing section to undertake a customer satisfaction survey to gain the views and opinions of both the public and the taxi trade.

2.2 The purpose of the surveys was to gain insight into the way that taxis are operated and how and why members of the public use their services. By gaining this insight from both parties it will assist the development of the licensing service in terms of shaping future taxi provision and policy for officers and Members as they will have a more informed picture of the local taxi trade.

3.0 Consultation Details

3.1 In order to obtain detailed data on how the users of Hackney Carriage & Private Hire vehicles view the trade and how the taxi trade operated, two satisfaction surveys were hosted via 'Survey Monkey'.

3.2 The surveys were live from 1 October until 30 November 2021. During this time they were promoted via emails to all licensed drivers, on the Council's social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) at timely intervals and in the Newark Advertiser.

3.3 Members of the public were asked questions relating to:

- Taxi Availability
- Punctuality
- Cleanliness
- Out of Town Taxis
- Taxi Ranks
- Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

3.4 The full list of the survey questions and responses are attached at **Appendix 1** to this report.

3.5 The taxi trade were asked questions relating to:

- Taxi Fees
- Vehicle Age Policy
- Taxi Ranks
- Taxi Standards

3.6 The full list of the survey questions and responses are attached at **Appendix 2** to this report.

4.0 Survey Results – Customers/Members of the Public

4.1 A total of 103 members of the public answered the customer satisfaction survey.

4.2 The highest percentage of the respondents were females (66%)

4.3 The highest percentage of respondents were over 60 years old.

4.4 66% of those that responded stated that they had access to a car.

4.5 The highest percentage of those questioned use a taxi several times a year.

4.6 Leisure was listed as the main purpose that people use taxis (73%).

4.7 Most of the taxi users surveyed (90%) said that they pre-booked their taxi.

4.8 When asked which taxi rank they use - Castle Gate, Newark rank was slightly higher (28%) than Middle Gate, Newark (26%)

4.9 The question of how satisfied customers are with the availability of taxis in NSDC was answered very broadly with people being equally neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied or somewhat dissatisfied. In future surveys we will ask the question in a different way, for example, are you satisfied with the availability of taxis? Yes or No.

4.10 The question regarding where in the district have you experienced difficulty in the availability of taxis, 64 people responded with the majority of people saying that Newark is where they struggled to get a cab.

4.11 When looking at the percentage for how satisfied customers were with the reliability of taxis that they have used, a combination of 53% were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied which compares to a combination of 35% were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The reasons that passengers gave for their answer to this question varied significantly.

4.12 70% of those surveyed said that they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the general condition of the taxis that they have used.

4.13 73% said they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied of the internal cleanliness of the taxi that they have used.

4.14 The percent split for whether customers feel that taxi fares within Newark & Sherwood are reasonable is nearly a 50/50 split. When answering the following question as to the reason for this, 10 of the comments mention DG/Z Car vehicles as expensive/overcharge. Therefore, this is noted and highlights the need to educate the general public to use Newark & Sherwood District licensed vehicles.

- 4.15 Question 19 of the survey asks if the customer has ever felt unsafe when taking a taxi, 83.5% said that they felt safe in the taxis and 16.5% said that they did not feel safe. The reasoning given as to why customers felt unsafe, 65% said the attitude of the driver, 47% standard of driving and 24% said the condition of the vehicle.
- 4.16 72% of those asked are aware that taxis licensed outside of Newark & Sherwood District Council can operate within Newark & Sherwood District.
- 4.17 Only 38% of people check when hiring a taxi if they are licensed by Newark & Sherwood.
- 4.18 62% of customers said that they could recognise a NSDC licensed vehicle.
- 4.19 92% of customers have said that they have never needed to use a wheelchair accessible taxi. From those, 8% who have needed to use a wheelchair accessible taxi, 30% stated that a wheelchair vehicle was readily available to them.
- 4.20 When asked who you would complain to if you had a problem with a taxi, 72% said the taxi company and 41% said the NSDC licensing.
- 4.21 A combined percentage of 86% think that CCTV is important in taxis. The reasons that people gave included to feel safe, gives driver and customer more protection and security.

5.0 Survey Results – Taxi trade

- 5.1 56 licensed drivers responded to the survey, 89% were male and 11% female. 107 licensed drivers were notified about the survey by email and a further 25 drivers were informed of the survey by letter.
- 5.2 The majority of those that responded to the survey have been a driver with Newark & Sherwood District Council and been licensed for more than 4 years.
- 5.3 The drivers were asked what time of day they worked (multiple answers could be chosen), 89% said between 7am and 12pm, 80% said 12pm and 5pm, 64% said 5pm and 11pm and 55% said they worked after 11pm.
- 5.4 Sunday was the least popular day to work with 26% of drivers saying they worked. The most popular day for drivers to work is Friday.
- 5.5 The hours that drivers worked varied across the board from 15 to 120 hours a week. The average being 45 hours.
- 5.6 The average miles that drivers stated they did in a year is 47,000.
- 5.7 71% of drivers said that they mainly worked in Newark and Southwell, 11% in Ollerton and Edwinstowe, 4% said Rainworth and Blidworth, 27% of drivers said other and stated these areas as airports and nationwide. When these percentages are added together they exceed 100%. This question allowed participants to choose more than one answer. In future surveys, this will be amended to only allow one answer to be chosen.

- 5.8 71% of drivers stated that they drive a Hackney Carriage and 29% drive a Private Hire Vehicle. 78% of our drivers are self-employed, 20% are employed by a company and 2% are both.
- 5.9 We asked drivers if they felt that the current cost of a licence application is reasonable – there was an equal 50/50% split. We asked for them to comment on the reason for this answer and received the commentary as shown in **Appendix 2** – Question 12.
- 5.10 We asked our drivers if they knew who to go to if they have a query about their licence, we are pleased to report that 91% of drivers responded as yes.
- 5.11 We asked drivers how satisfied they were with the response to licence queries/renewals from the Licensing Team. 73% of drivers said they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied.
- 5.12 We asked the drivers if they would make changes to the application/renewal process. 14% would make changes to the ability test, 4% to the DBS check, 27% knowledge test and 11% would make changes to the medical. This question allowed participants to choose more than one answer. In future surveys, this will be amended to only allow one answer to be chosen. We asked drivers to comment on to the reason that they chose their answers and received the commentary as shown in **Appendix 2** – Question 17.
- 5.13 We asked the drivers if they felt that the current taxi fares and tariff structure are reasonable, 54% said yes and 46% said no. We asked for reasons for their answers and these ranged from ‘costs of fuel are rising so fares need to rise’ to ‘people can only afford so much and more price rises would adversely affect the elderly who rely on taxis’.
- 5.14 We asked drivers which ranks they sit on. The rank on Middle Gate was most popular, followed by Castle Gate and Lincoln Street. 39% of drivers said that they do not use ranks.
- 5.15 The question of ‘do we need more ranks in the district and where should these be?’ was asked and out of the 56 people that answered 24 said that they did not think there was a need for more taxi ranks, 8 respondents thought there should be more ranks, for example, at Castle Station and Newark Town Centre. 18 people said that there is need for more spaces and enforcement on the existing ranks specifically Castle Gate and Middle Gate.
- 5.16 66% of drivers thought that the vehicle age policy was unreasonable.
- 5.17 Drivers were asked what alterations they would suggest to the age policy. These comments can be found in **Appendix 2** – Question 23.
- 5.18 77% of drivers said they would support more taxi enforcement in the district. In highest ranking order these are the areas in which drivers would like to see more enforcement: out of town vehicles; taxi ranks; investigation of complaints; vehicle investigations; and other.

- 5.19 45% of drivers said they feel safe while working as a driver. 50% of drivers said they felt safe most of the time and 5% said that they did not feel safe.
- 5.20 79% of drivers think that having CCTV in taxis is either very important, fairly important or somewhat important. The majority reason given for this is that it is there for the safety of drivers and passengers.
- 5.21 The Covid-19 pandemic has effected the UK in many ways, so we asked to question as to what impact has the pandemic/lockdown had on your ability to work as a driver. 4% said that they have not work since the start of the pandemic, 7% said it had no impact, 34% have only just started to work since the pandemic, 46% have worked through some of the pandemic and 9% have worked though most of the pandemic.
- 5.22 59% of drivers accessed the Council/Government grants. 21% of drivers (or their staff) utilised the furlough scheme.
- 5.23 The drivers were asked if they have retained any covid safety measures in their vehicles. 86% have increased vehicle cleaning, 89% use hand sanitiser, 63% use face coverings for drivers and 45% require customers to use face coverings.
- 5.24 Those that employ staff were asked if the Brexit/EU settlement scheme had impacted recruitment. 2% answered yes, 23% answered No and the question was deemed as not applicable to 75%.

6.0 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 None from this report

8.0 Digital Implications

- 8.1 There are no digital implications arising from this report.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee consider the contents of the report and identifies any issues it wishes to examine further.

Background Papers

NSDC Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy

For further information please contact Nicola Rowlands on Extension 5894.

Matthew Finch
Director – Communities & Environment