

LICENSING COMMITTEE

12 NOVEMBER 2013

REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To invite members to consider proposed changes to the current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **To recommend that members approve these proposed changes prior to full public consultation and final approval by the Rural and Economic Environmental Affairs Committee.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The current policy has been in place since 2007 and changes, in order to meet the objectives of the policy, are now considered necessary.

- 3.2 The main changes to the current policy are summarised as:

- Change to the vehicle age policy in that all vehicles, including purpose built and wheelchair accessible vehicles, must now be less than 6 years when first licensed;
- Further change to the age policy in that purpose built and wheelchair accessible vehicles can be licensed until they are 12 years old;
- Clarification of the 'exemption to display a private hire plate' policy;
- Medical reports required before a driver's licence is granted and periodically throughout the period of the licence to be provided by the applicant's own GP or a GP who has access to their records;
- A new Stretched Limousine and Prestige/Vintage vehicle policy;
- A new Vehicle Specification Policy is proposed in order to raise and maintain the standards of vehicles;
- A new Driver Specification which includes, amongst other matters, ensuring that drivers are aware of their responsibilities towards disabled passengers;
- Driving Standards Agency tests to be introduced where deemed necessary.

- 3.3 The current age policy allows for Purpose built 'London Style' cabs to be licensed no matter what their age. This has led to very old vehicles being presented for licensing, often vehicles that have been refused by another Local Authority. The new policy, whilst restricting newly licensed vehicles to the same age restriction as other vehicles, does recognise the robust nature of purpose built vehicles and the extra cost of providing such a vehicle, and

therefore proposes that these vehicles can continue to be licensed until they are twelve years old rather than ten as for other vehicles.

- 3.4 Wheelchair accessible vehicles are proposed to be included in the extension to twelve years. This recognises the extra cost of purchasing such a vehicle and the need for more of these vehicles within the fleet.
- 3.5 Private hire vehicles can, in certain circumstances, be exempted from displaying a licence plate, This is often required for commercial or safety reasons. The changes to the policy sets out more clearly the criteria for such an exemption.
- 3.6 Medical reports are, at the moment, able to be provided by any General Practitioner. This is not seen as sufficient. It is felt that only a GP with access to the applicant's own medical records can make a judgement as to the fitness of that person to meet the standards required.
- 3.7 A Stretched Limousine and Prestige/ Vintage vehicle specification is proposed in order to ensure that all vehicles licensed by Melton Bough Council are safe and maintained at the highest standards.
- 3.8 The new Driver and Vehicle specifications are intended to ensure that the high standards expected are achieved and maintained.
- 3.9 It is not anticipated that Driver Standards Agency tests will be used except in exceptional cases. It is unlikely to be used for existing drivers unless there are serious concerns about their ability to drive safely and responsibly.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 If approved all hackney carriage and private hire matters will be dealt with in future with reference to this policy

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial or other resource implications.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This policy has been written in accordance with the Council's responsibilities under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Town Police Clauses Act 1847.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 This policy has been written with Community Safety in mind and it endeavours, as far as is possible, to ensure that the travelling public are safe both in respect of the suitability of the driver and the mechanical soundness of the vehicle.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment Report will be produced before this policy comes into force.

9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 All risks associated with the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade have been addressed within this policy as far as it is reasonable to do so.

10.0 **CONSULTATION**

10.1 There will be full consultation before any of the proposals in this report become part of the Policy. Any replies to that consultation will be carefully considered. The views of the Trade, the Public and other statutory and voluntary organisations are a very important part of formulating any policy and these views are actively sought and will be given full consideration when this matter is put forward to the Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee for full approval.

11.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

11.1 All Wards

12.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

12.1 The current policy allows for a reduction of 25% off the fee where the vehicle is fuelled by LPG, Petrol/+ electric or compressed natural gas. This is to actively encourage the use of these vehicles for Hackney Carriage or Private Hire. There is no proposal to change this.

Contact Officer: Elaine Holdsworth

Date: 30 October 2013

Background Papers: None

Reference: