

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE AGE LIMITS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor P Thomas
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Wilkes – Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Licensing Committee has previously requested reports from officers in respect of revisiting the Council's vehicle licensing policies with regard to standards and age criteria for electric vehicles, looking at incentives for drivers to purchase less polluting vehicle, the number of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) licensed by the Council, ways to incentivise drivers to purchase WAVs and an estimate of the number of WAVs the district needs.
- 1.2 Officers have also been recently approached by representatives of hackney carriage and private hire licence holders who have requested that the Council gives consideration to relaxing its vehicle age limits for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles in response to economic factors impacting licence holders as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent global economic pressures.
- 1.3 This report has been produced to enable Members to consider these matters alongside one another.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Licensing Committee RESOLVE whether or not they wish officers to undertake a consultation exercise on proposals to amend the Council's vehicle age limits to those shown at Appendix 1 and to amend the Council's vehicle testing requirements to those set out at paragraph 3.15 of the report.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs of any consultation exercise undertaken will be met from existing budgets held by Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Proper consultation on any proposals to amend the Council's policies minimises the risk of legal challenge if the proposals are subsequently implemented.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 At their meeting on 14th March 2022, the Council's Licensing Committee approved the adoption of a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which took effect on 1st September 2022.
- 3.4 Towards the end of that meeting, Members discussed the Work Programme for 2021/22 and requested that reports be brought forward to future Licensing Committee meetings in respect of:
- Revisiting the Council's vehicle licensing policies with regard to standards and age criteria for electric vehicles.
 - Looking at incentives for drivers to purchase less polluting vehicles
 - The number of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) licensed by the Council, ways to incentivise drivers to purchase WAVs and an estimate of the number of WAVs the district needs.
- 3.5 This report has been produced to try and address all of the above requests and also sets out the details of some recent dialogue between officers and representatives of hackney carriage and private hire drivers licensed by the Council in respect of the current vehicle age policies in place.

- 3.6 The Council's current policy on the licensing of vehicles to be used as a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle includes the following requirements in respect of the age of the vehicle.

Hackney Carriage Vehicles	
Maximum age (when first licensed)	Maximum age at renewal of licence
7 years	10 years (12 years if WAV)

Private Hire Vehicles	
Maximum age (when first licensed)	Maximum age at renewal of licence
10 years (12 years if WAV)	10 years (12 years if WAV)

- 3.7 Currently these requirements are the same for every vehicle and do not take into account of how the vehicle is fuelled.
- 3.8 The current policy does provide some incentive for drivers to licence WAVs as they can be licensed for longer than a vehicle that cannot carry a wheelchair user who remains seated in their wheelchair. However there are still only 4 hackney carriages out of 88 and 1 private hire vehicle out of 16 licensed by the Council that are WAVs.
- 3.9 Recent dialogue has taken place between officers and representatives of the hackney carriage and private hire trade in which the following has been highlighted:
- The price of second-hand vehicles has increased dramatically in recent years
 - Licence holders are suffering financial difficulties as a result of the income lost during the coronavirus pandemic with many having used their savings to meet their day to day spending needs during this time
 - Licensed vehicles were used significantly less than usual during 2020 and 2021 as a result of the travel and business restrictions imposed in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

- 3.10 The representatives of the hackney carriage and private hire trade have therefore requested that consideration is given to amending the current vehicle licensing policies to relax the age limits currently imposed on vehicles licensed to be used as hackney carriage or private hire vehicles.
- 3.11 Officers have drawn up some suggested vehicle age limits for consideration by Members. The suggested age limits have been based on the following principles:
- Incentivising the take up of less polluting vehicles
 - Incentivising the take up of WAVs
 - Recognising the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic on hackney carriage and private hire licence holders
- 3.12 The suggested age limits are shown in a table at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.13 To help ensure that any relaxation of vehicle age limits does not put public safety at risk, officers are also suggesting that if the vehicle age limits are amended as suggested, the frequency of scheduled examinations of licensed vehicles should also be amended.
- 3.14 Currently licensed vehicles that are less than 7 years of age are required to be examined at the Council's Depot once per year, just before a licence for the vehicle is granted or renewed. Vehicles that are over the age of 7 years are also required to have a further examination 6 months after the licence for the vehicle took effect.
- 3.15 Officers would suggest that if the vehicle age limits were amended to those shown at **Appendix 1**, then the vehicle testing requirements should be simultaneously amended as follows:

Vehicles under 5 years of age	Examined once per year (just before a licence is granted or renewed)
Vehicles over 5 years of age and under 10 years of age	Examined twice per year (just before a licence is granted or renewed and 6 months after the licence takes effect)
Vehicles over 10 years of age	Examined three times per year (just before a licence is granted or renewed, 4 months after the licence takes effect and 8 months after the licence takes effect)

- 3.16 If Members were minded to amend the current vehicle age limits and vehicle examination requirements, this would involve amending the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. Therefore, officers would advise that proper consultation on the proposals is undertaken with licence holders and other relevant stakeholders.
- 3.17 Such consultation would also be an opportunity to try to establish how many wheelchair accessible hackney carriage / private hire vehicles are likely to be required in the district.
- 3.18 Members are therefore asked to consider whether they wish officers to undertake a consultation exercise on proposals to amend the Council's vehicle age limits to those shown at **Appendix 1** and to amend the Council's vehicle testing requirements to those set out at paragraph 3.15 of this report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 None

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix 1 - Suggested Vehicle Age Limits

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