

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

10 MARCH 2022

REVIEW OF THE VEHICLE AGE POLICY FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES.

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For Members to consider changes to the Council's vehicle age policy in respect of licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council's Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Policy sets out the specification that vehicles must meet in order to be considered for licensing. One of the criteria relates to the age of the vehicles. The Policy has always sought to strike a balance between the cost to the drivers of replacing vehicle and that have having modern taxi fleet to service the needs of taxi using population of Newark & Sherwood.

- 2.2 The vehicle age policy was last considered by Committee in 2015. The Policy agreed at that time was:

For all Private Hire vehicles the following age limits will apply:

vehicles must be under four years of age when first licensed and not over 8 years of age on renewal.

For all Hackney Carriage vehicles the following age limits will apply:

vehicles must be under four years of age when first licensed and not over 8 years of age on renewal. A purpose built or wheelchair accessible hackney carriage must be under seven years of age when first licensed and not over 12 years of age on renewal

- 2.3 A number of representations have been received from the taxi trade expressing concern over the current Policy. The concerns are threefold. Firstly the pandemic has had an enormous impact on the public demand for taxis. The closure of retail and hospitality and the minimisation of travel to venues such as schools, colleges and hospitals has reduced the demand and therefore there has been a shrinkage in the taxi fleet and very little work to support those that have continued to ply their trade.
- 2.4 Secondly, the cost of second hand vehicles has increased over the past two years and this is causing concern as to the affordability of replacing vehicles when they remain in good condition but have passed the age limit of our Policy.
- 2.5 The final element of concern expressed in the representations received was the disparity between the requirements of our Policy and those of the County Council. Some of the licenced drivers within Newark & Sherwood also undertake contracts for the county council. The county have a vehicle age requirement for these contracts of 10 years old on renewal. Our drivers have questioned why the two are not compatible.

- 2.6 In order to better understand whether the concerns of the trade could be addressed discussions have taken place with the Council's Transport Manager. He oversees the testing of our taxi fleet at the Council's depot. He is of the opinion that the improved materials used and the quality of construction of modern day cars, is such that our current age policy could be amended without any detriment to the quality of the fleet.
- 2.8 In order to provide Members with as much information as possible an exercise was undertaken to benchmark the NSDC age policy with that of other local authorities. The table at **Appendix A** sets out the comparisons.
- 2.9 An informal consultation exercise has also been undertaken with the taxi trade to seek their views on any potential changes to allow Members to understand their view point. The detailed comments are attached as **Appendix B**. However, in summary the trade are very much in favour of a relaxing of the age policy. They see this as one way of reducing their costs during the tough times they are facing.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 There are compelling reasons why the age policy should be reviewed based on the current second hand car market, the challenges to the taxi trade and the general improvement in vehicle quality.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the age policy should be amended as set out below.

All vehicles must be under nine years of age on first registration and not over 10 years old on renewal. Vehicles over 6 years of age that fail the licensing vehicle test on structural damage or a major mechanical issue will not be licensed.

A purpose built or wheelchair accessible vehicle must be under nine years of age when first licensed and not over 12 years of age on renewal

4.0 Equalities Implications

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

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 None from this report

6.0 Digital Implications

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

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Council's age policy for Hackney Carriage Vehicles and Private Hire Vehicles be amended to as follows:

All vehicles must be under 9 years of age on first registration and not over 10 years old on renewal. Vehicles over 6 years of age that fail the licensing vehicle test on structural damage or a major mechanical issue will not be licensed.

A purpose built or wheelchair accessible vehicle must be under 9 years of age when first licensed and not over 12 years of age on renewal

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the vehicle age policy reflects the current used car market conditions and supports the taxi trade.

Background Papers

NSDC Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Policy

For further information please contact Alan Batty on Extension 5467.

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