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County Borough Council

PLANNING, REGULATORY AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Date Written	11 th September 2022
Report Author	Joanne Baber
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	19 th October 2022

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Request to increase the age limit for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles / Cais I gynyddu terfyn oedran ar gyfer Cerbydau Hacni a cherbydau Hurio Preifat

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 A request has been received from some members of the taxi trade to increase the age limit for new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles.

1.2 The current "Taxi Licensing Application Policy" stipulates that applications for new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles will only be accepted for vehicles that are under 4 years old from first registration/manufacture at the time of the initial application.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

2.1 Members increase the age limit for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles which are wheelchair accessible on initial application from under 4 years to under 6 years.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A request has been received from some members of the taxi trade to increase the age limit for new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles. A copy of the request is attached at **Appendix A** to this report.
- 3.2 The current “Taxi Licensing Application Policy” stipulates that applications for new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles will only be accepted for vehicles that are under 4 years old from first registration/manufacture at the time of the initial application. This age restriction does not apply to vehicles once the initial licence is granted, provided that renewal applications are submitted prior to the expiry date of the licence. A copy of the Policy is attached at **Appendix B** to this report.
- 3.3 All licensed vehicles undertake two MOT tests plus the associated taxi inspection per year – once prior to first licensing/renewal and at the 6 month point of the licence duration.
- 3.4 There are currently 153 Hackney Carriages and 50 Private Hire vehicles licensed with this Authority. An age profile of these licensed vehicles is outlined below:

AGE	NUMBER OF VEHICLES
Under 1	2
1	7
2	8
3	16
4	23
5	25
6	27
7	24
8	26
9	15
10	7
11	7
12	6
13	5
14	1
15	1
16	2
17	1

- 3.5 Of the 203 licensed vehicles, only 10 are wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- 3.6 To assist Members, data on age policies has been obtained from the neighbouring authorities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly, Powys and Blaenau Gwent. A table outlining the information is attached at **Appendix C** to this report.
- 3.7 Questionnaires were sent out to all 94 proprietors of currently licensed Hackney Carriage & Private Hire vehicles to gain the views of more members of the trade. 22

responses were received. A table outlining details of the responses is attached at **Appendix D** to this report.

- 3.8 An email from an operator was also received in response to the questionnaire. A copy of the email is attached as **Appendix E** to this report.
- 3.9 Taxi and Private Hire licensing is a devolved matter under the Wales Act 2017. Welsh Government are currently engaging with key stakeholders with a view to bringing in new legislation. Their long-term aim is produce a licensing system which ensures public safety, equality and consistency across Wales as a whole. This may or may not include a national vehicle age policy. However as the new legislation will take some time to develop properly, officers feel it is prudent to consider this matter now as a short-term measure.
- 3.10 Auto Trader Retail Price Index provides an overview of the latest price data from vehicles sold via Auto Trader as well as other trade car listings. The most recent comparison graph as well as the monthly commentary for September 2022 are attached at **Appendix F** to this report.
- 3.11 The results of the returned questionnaires showed that the majority were in favour of increasing the age limit for vehicles on first licensing. However, as there was only a 23% return rate, this would indicate that the vast majority of vehicle proprietors do not wish to change the age policy.
- 3.12 The lack of wheelchair accessible vehicles is a concern for the Licensing Department. Officers regularly receive queries from members of the public who are unable to book a wheelchair accessible vehicle.
- 3.13 Hackney carriage and private hire services are a vital aspect of the transport network. They are essential for many passengers with disabilities.
- 3.14 The Equality Act 2010 requires providers of public transport services, including the proprietors and operators of taxis and private hire vehicles, to ensure people with disabilities are not discriminated against (or treated less favourably).
- 3.15 It is acknowledged that the licensed trade in the borough would be unable to support a requirement that all new vehicles must be wheelchair accessible. However, there is clearly a need to improve the number of licensed vehicles that are wheelchair accessible. The Licensing Department therefore propose that members increase the age limit for new applications for wheelchair accessible vehicles from under 4 years to under 6 years. This would allow licensees greater flexibility and choice in sourcing wheelchair accessible vehicles and encourage an increase in the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles available in the borough.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 4.1 None.

5.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral / Not Applicable	
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	3 of 4	0 of 4	1 of 4	
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	4 of 5	0 of 5	1 of 5	
3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	1 of 10	0 of 10	9 of 10	
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	0 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6	
5. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required	
	1 of 1	0 of 0	n/a	
6. Data and Evidence to inform the proposal	Yes		No	
	x			
7. Biodiversity & resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced	Neutral/Not Applicable
	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
Summary				
The main positive impacts are:	The proposal contributes to 3 of the 4 well being objectives and meets four of the sustainable development principle. The proposal has a positive impact on 1 of the protected characteristic group.			
The main negative impacts are:	None identified.			

ELLIS COOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CLLR MICHELLE SYMONDS
PORTFOLIO MEMBER FOR PUBLIC
PROTECTION, CRIME AND DISORDER

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No