

Cabinet – 12th October 2017

Addendum Paper

Agenda Item 7 – Taxi Licensing Policy

The following comment, with reference to the proposed Taxi Licensing Policy was received from a member of the taxi trade on the 28th September 2017 (after the consultation deadline);

I would like to suggest, in order to make things fair and equal trading conditions, that persons that operate vehicles that have historically been issued with a hackney carriage plate and are not wheelchair accessible, should in the future have to supply a wheelchair accessible vehicle. This would happen when their existing saloon car can no longer be plated because of its age. This would give any operator of a hackney carriage plate enough time to prepare for the change. (Everyone knows how expensive wheelchair vehicles are in comparison to ordinary saloons and some people have had a distinct advantage financially for years) regards

The Licensing team note the comment and following view from the Law Commission and their 2014 'Taxi and Private Hire Services' report (Law Com No 347);

It is our view that a mixed fleet would, in general, more appropriately meet the needs of disabled people. It is clear that one size does not fit all, and that there is a danger of focusing too heavily on the needs of passengers in wheelchairs, perhaps at the expense of those with other, sometimes less obvious, accessibility needs. Even amongst those who use wheelchairs there are different requirements. This is one of the reasons why the Department for Transport has found it so difficult to identify a "universal" vehicle in order to implement provisions in the Equality Act 2010 and make regulations on taxi accessibility

Current policy, to which there is no proposed change, is that all new hackney vehicle licences must be wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs). Existing licences introduced prior to the current policy may remain non-wheelchair accessible (i.e. saloon cars).

It should also be noted that included in the proposed policy is the removal of the requirement for side loading wheelchair accessible vehicles, which means that smaller cheaper to purchase and run WAVs will be available to the trade. Initial research has indicated that the cost of these vehicles is comparable to standard saloon vehicles (model/specification dependant).

The current and proposed policy promotes a mixed fleet of vehicles rather than going against the view of the Law Commission. It is also felt that the new

policy allowing rear-loading WAVs may encourage a further uptake in the number of WAVs operating within the borough.

The Licensing team would however welcome further discussion on this matter to ensure a suitable coverage of WAVs at the next Taxi Forum meeting.

Kind regards

Trevor Ford | Chartered Environmental Health Practitioner | MCIEH CEnvH, MIOA
Team Leader – Environmental Protection & Licensing
Ashford Borough Council

01233 330397 | Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL