

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LICENSING  
COMMITTEE**

**1st July 2013**

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**PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE POLICY –  
MULTI SEATED WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Rebecca Blake
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Steve Jordan – Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 To provide Members with feedback on the responses received during the consultation with the taxi trade on the draft Private Hire Vehicle Policy.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE:**

**Whether or not to approve the draft Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy at appendix 1 to come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013.**

**3. KEY ISSUES**

**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications to Redditch Borough Council.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.2 There are no legal implications to the Council arising from this report however, should an applicant feel aggrieved by any decision made by a Sub Committee then the applicant may apply for a Judicial Review.

**Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.3 On the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012, at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee it was recommended that taxi proprietors who operate adapted vehicles should be offered a licence for an extended period of time over the standard period of time for vehicles (currently 9 years) from the date of first registration.

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- 3.4 In November 2011, members gathered data on adapted vehicles which showed that there were 4 adapted Hackney Carriages and 10 adapted Private Hire vehicles, representing approximately 2% of the taxi fleet, compared to Worcester City Council (30%) and Wyre Forest District Council (50%). These figures have not changed to date.
- 3.5 The Access for Disabled People Task Group was concerned about the relatively low number of adapted vehicles currently in the taxi and private hire fleet operating in Redditch.
- 3.6 A key incentive that the group believes would encourage an increase in the number of adapted vehicles would be to offer licenses for an extended period of time for adapted vehicles. In this context, adapted vehicles would be awarded licenses to operate for a number of years longer than standard vehicles.
- 3.7 A higher age criteria could enable a taxi company to justify the significant expenditure required to invest in an adapted vehicle, which costs more than a standard vehicle as the costs involved would be offset by the additional trade that could be attracted over an extended period of time.
- 3.8 Neighbouring Authorities provide:

Licensing Authority	Wheelchair Accessible - Number of years
Bromsgrove District Council	10 years
Wychavon District Council	12 years
Malvern District Council	10 year
Worcester City Council	12 years
Wyre Forest District Council	7 years

- 3.9 Officers, having considered the feedback from Members, the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee proposed to overhaul the Private Hire Vehicle Policy to incorporate adapted vehicles (wheelchair accessible) and multi seated vehicles and prepared a draft policy which can be found at appendix 1.
- 3.10 This draft policy was considered by the Licensing Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and resolved that officers undertake a 6 week consultation with the taxi trade and other agencies on the draft Private Hire Vehicle Policy. Officers were also asked to prepare a report detailing the findings of the consultation, to be submitted to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee.

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- 3.11 The consultation exercise began on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and was conducted alongside another consultation with the taxi trade on a proposal to make disability awareness training a mandatory requirement for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers in the Borough.
- 3.12 17 of the responses received during the consultation exercise made comment on the draft Private Hire Vehicle Policy. These can be seen at appendix 2.
- 3.13 The vast majority of respondents are generally in favour of the proposal to extend the age limit criteria for adapted vehicles. However a number made additional comments.

Some of the comments made by the respondents were:

- Would like the additional inspection costs for older vehicles subsidised in some way
  - Consideration should still be given to extending the life of vehicles that reach 12 years of age if they remain in good condition.
  - The extension of age limits should be applied to all private hire vehicles, not just those adapted to carry wheelchair bound passengers
  - The extension of age limits should also be applied to hackney carriage vehicles that are adapted to carry wheelchair users in their wheelchairs.
- 3.14 One letter was received from two joint respondents who are against the proposal on the grounds that it is “false economy” to spend money repairing older vehicles and that they would prefer to invest in newer vehicles. The respondents also raise “green issues” and suggest that they cannot understand why the Council would promote old technology.
- 3.15 In relation to the consultation responses received, Members should note that it would remain open to the owner of any particular vehicle to ask the Council to depart from its policy and licence that vehicle even though it exceeds the upper age limit.
- 3.16 Members may also recall that the idea of extending the life of wheelchair accessible vehicles was to incentivise the provision of such vehicles. It is not proposed that the age limit should be extended for all vehicles. This would defeat the object of this exercise but in any event is an entirely different proposal, which officers would not support.

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3.17 Members may also want to give consideration to the suggestion that the age-limit criteria be amended in relation to hackney carriage vehicles that are capable of carrying a wheelchair user in their wheelchair.

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 None

#### **5. APPENDICES**

- 5.1 Appendix 1 - Draft Private Hire Vehicle Policy  
Appendix 2 - Consultation responses received

#### **AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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