

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

6 June 2014

Report by Chief Officer (Legal & Procurement)

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES – AGE LIMITS ETC

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to consider the introduction of age limits etc for taxis and private hire vehicles licensed by the Council in terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and is supplementary to the report on wheelchair accessible vehicles.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Licensing Committee:-

- (a) consider the introduction of a maximum age for new licensed vehicles;
- (b) consider the introduction of a maximum age limit for a taxi or private hire vehicle; and
- (c) consider the introduction of more than one annual inspection for vehicles above a certain age and to determine what that age should be.

**BACKGROUND**

At present East Renfrewshire Council has no age limit either for the introduction of a newly licensed vehicle or for a vehicle in service. The only criteria is that the vehicle remains capable of passing an annual inspection. Many other local authorities around Scotland have now introduced age limits and more stringent testing regimes. East Renfrewshire Council should now consider if changes are required within its local authority area.

**REPORT**

- (a) The licensing section of the legal services division carried out a survey of the public and private hire and taxi operators in 2012. In general, the public favoured newer vehicles whereas the respondents from the taxi/private hire trade preferred older or no age limits;
- (b) although all vehicles presently operating are capable of passing the basic annual inspection, newer vehicles can provide certain advantages over older vehicles such as:-
  - (i) safety standards for newer vehicles are higher than older vehicles;
  - (ii) newer vehicles are perceived as cleaner and fresher than older vehicles by the public;

- (iii) newer vehicles have lower emissions;

Taxis and private hire vehicles, especially taxis at taxi ranks, form part of the civic landscape and it could be said that newer vehicles would improve the overall impression of East Renfrewshire as a local authority area.

- (c) as the surrounding local authorities have introduced age limits, older vehicles which no longer qualify for those local authorities are coming to East Renfrewshire to be licensed with East Renfrewshire now licensing vehicles deemed unsuitable in Renfrewshire or Glasgow or South Lanarkshire, our neighbouring authorities.

If the Committee is minded to allow older vehicles to remain licensed then it is recommended that more than one annual inspection should be mandatory. This is also in line with the procedures of other local authorities. There is anecdotal evidence that some taxis or private hire vehicles are on the road 24hrs a day seven days a week in a series of shifts by two or more drivers. Annual mileage for such a vehicle can be in the region of 30,000-40,000 miles per year. A newer vehicle having covered less miles is better placed to cope with such continuous use but older vehicles should have more than one annual inspection in order to ensure that standards are maintained.

The Committee is requested to consider the introduction of the following conditions of licensing of private hire and taxi vehicles:-

- (a) It is recommended that there should be no difference in the treatment of taxis or private hire vehicles for the purposes of age limit criteria;
- (b) the Committee is asked to consider the following as suitable arrangements:-
  - (i) taxis and private hire vehicles shall be no more than 7 years old or shall not have covered more than 150,000 miles, whichever occurs first;
  - (ii) no vehicle shall be more than 5 years old from the date of its first registration when first licensed or when submitted as a substitute vehicle for a vehicle already licensed and shall have covered less than 100,000 miles;
  - (iii) any vehicle which is 5 years of age from its first registration or older or has covered over 100,000 miles will require to be tested every six months.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

At present, 82% of all taxi and private hire vehicles are 7 years or younger so the proposals would only affect 18% of the presently licensed vehicles. It is proposed that those vehicles out with the age limits already licensed be allowed one further period of licensing (up to a maximum of 3 years) as a transitional arrangement.

There will inevitably be increased administration and enforcement due to the new proposals. It is considered that the administration can be provided within the existing staffing levels of Customer First and Business Support Units but that it may be necessary to increase the hours of the part-time enforcement officer as a result of any additional measures introduced by this report and the report on wheelchair accessible vehicles.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Licensing Committee:-

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- (b) consider the introduction of a maximum age limit for a taxi or private hire vehicle; and
- (c) consider the introduction of more than one annual inspection for vehicles above a certain age and to determine what that age should be.

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