

REPORT TO:	Licensing Committee
DATE:	8 June 2016
LEAD OFFICER:	Head of Planning and Public Protection
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SUBJECT:	Proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.2 To inform the Licensing Committee of the results of the consultation on the proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the Licensing Committee in December 2015 Members approved for Officers to start formal consultation with the trade, the travelling public and other representative bodies, and to report back to a future meeting with the results.

3. POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

- 3.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and Town Police Clauses Act 1847

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 We believe that taxis are an integral part of the public transportation system and a part of the infrastructure of our society. There are few people who have not used a taxi service for some purpose at some time, whether it be for business, domestic or social purposes. Society takes the provision of such a service, whether private hire or hackney carriage, largely for granted and expects that the journey will be without incident or concern. We believe that this is exactly as it should be and that taxi passengers simply want a reliable, efficient and effective service delivered in a safe and secure manner.
- 4.2 Officers do recognise that there are many hardworking licence holders, within the industry, who are rightly proud of the service they provide. Nevertheless, any service to the public is a potential target for the less scrupulous in society. This may include those who might use their position to exploit the travelling public, for example by demanding more than the legal fare or to abuse them or their property (e.g. when carrying vulnerable individuals such as children or unaccompanied females)

- 4.3 However, we also recognise that while licensing of the taxi and PH trades seeks to protect the public from the unscrupulous, too restrictive an approach can work against the public interest. This can potentially create barriers of entry to the trade, restricting the supply of taxi services, and subsequently, having unintended safety implications (e.g. resulting in insufficient taxis to ensure the vulnerable get home safely). We therefore want to ensure that each of our licensing requirements is suitably justified and proportionate to the risks we seek to address and that the costs incurred are commensurate to the benefits.
- 4.4 As a reminder to Members, a full review of the existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy has taken place, (including specification and conditions). This included two workshop sessions where the taxi trade, Elected Members and Fleet Services were involved, followed by a presentation to Members of the Licensing Committee by Fleet Services.
- 4.5 The review process resulted in the drafting of the Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicle Policy, which went out to consultation in January of this year. A copy of the proposed that went out to consultation can be found at Appendix A for Members information.

5. **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 A period of 8 weeks public consultation took place between January and March. All members of the trade (drivers/proprietors/owners/operators) were contacted and given the opportunity to view the draft Policy document, either 'on line' by the provision of a link or a hard copy, and they were encouraged to submit comments. Representative bodies ie Disability Groups, Town and Community Councils etc, were also consulted with a press release and links via social media.
- 5.2 A total of 10 responses were received and a summary of those is available at Appendix B. The redacted versions of the full responses are available at Appendix C.
- 5.3 It is interesting to note that the majority of the responses to the policy have been positive. In fact the only areas where there has not been broad agreement relate to the colour requirement for Hackney Carriages and the requirement for hackney carriage vehicles to be 3 years old and private hire being 5 years old.
- 5.4 It is therefore proposed that further consideration should be given to the policy, in particular into the areas for age and colour of vehicles and the use of trailers. Members are directed to Appendix D and are advised to take account of the suggested options to assist in their deliberations, in addition to any other option that Members may identify.

6. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 If Members are minded to reach an agreement on any amendments to the policy that they instruct officers to amend the policy accordingly.
- 6.2 Members instruct officers to carry out further consultation with interested parties and to take account of any representations received in the final version of the policy that will be presented at a future meeting of the County Council.