

REPORT: Regulatory Committee

DATE: 13th January 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Resources

SUBJECT: Taxi Licensing Matter

WARDS: Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

Members are asked to consider a request from a member of the local taxi and private hire trade to temporarily increase the age a vehicle may continue to be licensed for based on the current economic circumstances.

2. RECOMMENDED

That the Committee considers the proposals and make appropriate recommendations to the Executive Board.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council received a request from a member of the local taxi and private hire trade whose vehicle would need to be replaced early in 2021 due the age limits imposed by this Council. The request is to temporarily extend the maximum age that a vehicle may remain licensed.
- 3.2 The individual explained that due to the Corona Virus pandemic and the resulting economic situation they felt that this would assist those members of the trade whose vehicles would soon need to be replaced due to age and who may struggle to obtain the finance for a replacement vehicle.
- 3.3 Following the request, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Regulatory Committee were notified and a consultation exercise of the taxi trade was undertaken.

- 3.4 Where an email address was held, Single Status Drivers Licence holders were asked for their comments on the following:
- (1) whether they considered an extension of the maximum age limit is needed.
 - (2) and if you feel it was needed, what did they consider the length of time for the temporary extension should be.
- 3.5 Although email addresses are held for the majority of drivers the consultation questions were also sent to the private hire operators to pass on to any driver who didn't receive an email.

4. CURRENT AGE LIMITS

- 4.1 The Council's current policy on age limits of licensed vehicles are:

Non fully wheelchair accessible vehicles

Can be no more than 5 years old when first licensed and the maximum age limit is 10 years old.

Fully wheelchair accessible vehicles

Can be no more than 13 years old when first licensed and the maximum age limit is 16 years old.

- 4.2 Some Members may recall that a similar request to temporarily increase the age limits of licensed vehicles was made in 2012 following the banking recession.
- 4.3 On 19th March 2012 the Regulatory Committee resolved to allow a two year extension of licensed vehicles with two conditions:
- Any vehicle taking advantage of the extension shall be subject to three tests per year.
 - No vehicle taking advantage of the extension may be transferred to another proprietor.

5. CONSULTATION FINDINGS

- 5.1 There were 77 replies to the consultation which has provided the following information:
- 63 are in favour of an extension to the current maximum vehicle age
 - 9 of those in favour of an extension stated that a 12 month extension is appropriate
 - A further 5 in favour of an extension of 12 months stated that it should then be reviewed further
 - 11 were in favour of a two year extension

- A further 4 were in favour of a two year extension then be reviewed again
- Many of those who were in favour of an extension to the current age policy made various other comments
- 11 replies were against any extension to the current age policy

5.2 The findings with comments were collated and can be found at Appendix A of this report.

6. MATTERS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

- 6.1 Replacing a licensed vehicle on attaining current age limits could, in the current time of austerity, be punitive to the proprietor and place unreasonable financial and/or personal pressures on Licence holders.
- 6.2 Removing the Conditions in their entirety could lower the standards achieved in the Borough since age restrictions were established, to the detriment of the service to which the public are entitled.
- 6.3 Any extension that may be granted would only benefit a small percentage of the trade whose vehicles reach the current maximum age in the next year or two. Even those licence-holders who may benefit from any temporary extension to the current policy may not necessarily take advantage of any potential rule change and choose to obtain a newer vehicle anyway.

7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 The Committee are asked to recommend one of the following options to the Executive Board:
- Decline the request
 - Grant the request to modify the policy for a temporary period with any such conditions that are deemed appropriate

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Any changes made would affect existing policies regarding age restrictions on, and possibly standards of, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles Licensed by Halton Borough Council

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

10. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES

10.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None

10.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

N/A

10.3 A healthy Halton

N/A

10.4 A Safer Halton

None

10.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

N/A

11. RISK ANALYSIS

There are no associated risks which have been identified with this item.

12. QUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality or diversity issues related to a review.

13. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Consultation Docs	Licensing Section	Kay Cleary Nick Wheeler
Current licence Conditions/policies	Licensing Section HBC Website	Kay Cleary Nick Wheeler