

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 25 February 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Resources

**SUBJECT:** Taxi Licensing - Temporary Policy amendment to the current age restrictions on Licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To receive a report from the Regulatory Committee meeting on 13 January 2021 recommending that the Executive Board approve a temporary amendment to the current age restrictions of licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.

## **2. RECOMMENDED:** That the Executive Board -

Temporarily amend the maximum age restriction on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles by two years for a two-year period with the following conditions:

- i. Any vehicle taking advantage of the relaxation of the restriction be subject to 3 tests per year.
- ii. No vehicle taking advantage of the relaxation of the restriction may be transferred to another proprietor.

## **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 At their meeting on 13 January 2021 the Regulatory Committee were advised that a member of the local taxi and private hire trade's licensed vehicle would need to be replaced due to the age restrictions imposed by this Council. The request by the driver was to temporarily extend the maximum age that a vehicle may remain licensed.
- 3.2 The individual explained that due to Corona virus pandemic and the resulting economic situation it was felt that it would assist those members of the trade whose vehicles would soon need to be replaced due to age and who may struggle to obtain finance for a replacement vehicle.

3.3 Following the request the Chair and Vice Chair of the Regulatory Committee were notified and a consultation exercise of the taxi trade was undertaken.

3.4 The consultation exercise was undertaken by e mailing those members of the trade who had supplied email addresses to the Licensing Section.

3.5 They were asked for comments on the following:

(1) Whether they considered an extension of the maximum age limit was needed

(2) If they believed an extension is needed, what did they consider the length of time for the temporary extension should be.

#### **4. CURENT 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The subject matter of this report is to adopt the temporary amendment to the licensed vehicle age policy.

## **7. MATTERS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT**

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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 chose to obtain a newer vehicle anyway.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES**

**8.1 Children and Young People in Halton**  
N/A

**8.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton**  
N/A

**8.3 A healthy Halton**

It might be considered that allowing older vehicles to be used as taxis may cause more pollution. However, as the potential uptake for the

dispensation is slightly less than 4% of the taxi and private hire fleet and the dispensation is only for 2 years this is not considered an issue.

**8.4 A Safer Halton**

N/A

**8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A

**9. RISK ANALYSIS**

N/A

**10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

N/A

**11. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Regulatory Committee Item and Minutes