

Update on the Taxi Licensing Policy

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Tony Lock, Protecting Core Services
Director:	Netta Meadows, Service Delivery
Lead Specialist:	Vicki Dawson, Lead Specialist – Environmental Health, Service Delivery
Lead Officer:	Rachel Lloyd, Specialist - Licensing, Service Delivery
Contact Details:	rachel.lloyd@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462134

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Committee on the review of the Taxi Licensing Policy and wheelchair accessible vehicles.
2. Request that the Committee approves work on a Somerset Taxi Licensing Policy.
3. To provide information about the recently published Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards

Public Interest

4. This is a report to update the Licensing Committee on the review of the Taxi Licensing Policy and to request that a recommendation to create a Somerset wide hackney carriage and private hire policy is approved. The Council currently has a Taxi Licensing Policy, this includes application requirements for hackney carriage and private hire driver applications, types of vehicles that can be licensed as well as a condition that at least 20% of the licensed hackney carriages (taxis) are wheelchair accessible. The report contains information about the current number of licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles. The report also contains information about the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards which are designed to protect children and vulnerable people. There is an expectation that the recommendations in the standards are implemented and this is likely to mean that there will be changes to our current requirements for vehicle, driver and operator applicants and licence holders.

Recommendations

5. That the Licensing Committee:
 - a. Approves work to create a Somerset Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.
 - b. Note the recently published Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

Background

6. Full Council adopted the South Somerset District Council – Taxi Licensing Policy at the meeting of 6th November 2014 and agreed that it was to take effect from 1st April 2015.
7. As the Policy has been in force for 5 years it is due for review.

Taxi Licensing Policy

8. A meeting has been arranged to create a Somerset wide hackney carriage/private hire policy.
9. A legal opinion on the enforceability of a having a proportion of wheelchair accessible vehicles has been sought. The legal advice was not available at the time of writing the report. There are currently 104 licensed hackney carriage vehicles and 47 of these are wheelchair accessible (45%) (data analysed 21/08/20). In December 2019 there were 111 licensed hackney carriages and 48 of these were wheelchair accessible (48%).
10. Full consultation will take place in relation to any changes made to the wheelchair accessible vehicle section as well as the overall Policy.

Statutory Taxi and Private Vehicle Standards

11. The Committee submitted a response on the measures proposed in the draft Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards when the consultation ran in 2019.
12. The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (as shown in Appendix 1) were published in July 2020.
13. It is expected that recommendations are implemented unless there are compelling reasons not to. The standards are designed to improve consistency in the licensing system and reduce the risk of harm posed to children and vulnerable adults.
14. The standards introduce new and amended practices. These include:
 - 6 monthly Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for drivers.
 - Annual basic disclosure required for vehicle applicants (where the applicant is not a driver subject to a biannual check) 'fit and proper person check.'
 - Annual basic disclosure required for private hire operator applicants and licence holders and use of 'fit and proper person check' (where the applicant or licence holder is not a licensed driver subject to a biannual check).
 - Safeguarding training
 - Recommendation to consult on the use of CCTV in licensed vehicles.



South Somerset District Council Financial Implications

15. Officer time to review Policy.

16. The above costs associated costs can be met from existing budgets.

Council Plan Implications

17. To promote a strong and growing economy with thriving urban, rural and land-based businesses

18. To enable health communities which are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

19. Nothing which affects the report on “greenhouse gas emissions from local authorities own estate and operations”.

Equality and Diversity Implications

20. There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

21. A further report regarding any proposed changes to the policy as informed by the evidence will be supported by an Equality Impact Assessment.

Privacy Impact Assessment

22. No change to processing of personal data.

Background Papers

- South Somerset District Council - Taxi Licensing Policy
 - South Somerset District Council decisions taken by South Somerset District Council 6th November 2014
-