

## Appendix 1 – proposal

### Somerset Council policy on hackney carriage and private hire vehicle testing and emergency equipment

#### 1 Criteria for tests

- 1.1 There is no statutory inspection procedure and standard for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles. In relation to the 'Criteria for tests', the [DfT guidance](#) states that *"MOT tests ensure that vehicles comply with roadworthiness and environmental standards which contribute to the government's road safety strategy. It seems appropriate to apply the same criteria to taxis and private hire vehicles. However, taxis and private hire vehicles provide a service to the public, so it is also appropriate to set criteria for assessing the internal condition of the vehicle, for example, wheelchair fixings and restraint straps, though these criteria should not be unreasonably onerous."*
- 1.2 The Freight Transport Association (FTA) published the 'National Inspection Standards' in 2012; a 'Best practice guide to inspection of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles'. That document *"...sets out the procedures and standards for those who carry out inspections of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles"*. It *"...provides additional testing requirements to those in the MOT Inspection Manual"* and advises that *"...local licensing authorities use the best practice guide in conjunction with the VOSA MOT Inspection Manual as an advocate to public safety."*
- 1.3 In recognition of the guidance from the DfT and FTA, the Council's method of determining the mechanical safety and general suitability of vehicles comprises of two elements:
  - (a) An MOT.
  - (b) A vehicle suitability inspection (VSI).
- 1.4 The format of the VSI is set out in the 'Somerset Council hackney carriage and private hire VSI manual'. It is based on the procedures and standards contained in the 'National Inspection Standards', which have been modified in some places to be consistent with the latest DfT guidance and Council policy.
- 1.5 For a vehicle licence to be granted or renewed, a vehicle must pass an MOT and VSI not more than 30 days before the date the licence application is submitted.
- 1.6 The MOT can be undertaken by any DVSA approved test station. The VSI can only be undertaken by one of the following Council nominated test stations:

Name and address	Contact details
TBC	TBC

## 2 Vehicle testing frequency

- 2.1 The [DfT guidance](#) states that *“An annual test for licensed vehicles of whatever age (including vehicles that are less than three years old) seems appropriate in most cases, unless local conditions suggest that more frequent tests are necessary. More frequent tests may be appropriate for older vehicles which may be more prone to mechanical defects (see Vehicle age limits or for vehicles owned by proprietors that persistently present vehicles that do not meet the standards required by the authority.”*
- 2.2 The Council's policy is that hackney carriages and private hire vehicles will receive one VSI a year, just before an application to renew the licence is submitted.
- 2.3 The Council has the power to attach conditions to vehicle licences and, in individual cases where it is appropriate and justified, this can be used to impose a duty on a proprietor have their vehicle tested more frequently.

## 3. Emergency equipment

- 3.1 There is no requirement for taxis and PHVs to carry a fire extinguisher or first aid kit.
- 3.2 The [DfT guidance](#) states: *“The Highway Code advises that should a vehicle catch fire, the occupants should get out of the vehicle quickly and to a safe place and not to attempt to extinguish a fire in the engine compartment, as opening the bonnet will make the fire flare. The National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) recommends that licensing authorities that require fire extinguishers to be provided in vehicles, should ensure that suitable and sufficient training is received by the drivers.”*
- 3.3 *“The NFCC’s advice is that if a licensing authority elects not to require drivers to undertake training on the safe way to tackle a vehicle fire, vehicles should not be required to carry fire extinguishers and drivers advised to get out and stay out of the vehicle and call 999, rather than attempting to firefight.”*
- 3.4 The Council does not see any reason why licensed drivers should be expected to behave differently than any other motorist and attempt to tackle a fire. Therefore, there is no requirement to carry a fire extinguisher and be suitably trained to use it.
- 3.5 In a similar way, the Council does not require hackney carriages or PHVs to carry first aid kits, or for licensed drivers to be first aid trained.