

Permission to apply for a non-wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence

Executive Portfolio Holder: Peter Gubbins, Licensing Portfolio Holder
Assistant Director: Laurence Willis, Environment
Service Manager: Nigel J Marston, Licensing Manager
Contact Details: nigel.marston@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462150

Purpose of the Report

The Committee is asked to consider a request from Greenway Travel Limited to be permitted to apply for a hackney carriage vehicle licence for a non-wheelchair accessible vehicle contrary to paragraph 6.32 of the South Somerset District Council – Taxi Licensing Policy.

Options available

- (1) Refuse the request;
- (2) Accept the request and allow the applicant to submit a full application for a hackney carriage vehicle licence for a non-wheelchair accessible vehicle;
- (3) Should option 2 be the preferred option then to delegate the decision on the grant of the licence to the Licensing Manager, once an application is received.

Background

Officers would normally deal with applications for hackney carriage licences, however as licensing this vehicle would necessitate a departure from our agreed policy, it was necessary that the matter should come before committee.

Report Detail

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. The policy states at paragraph 6.32 that all new vehicle applications be restricted to purpose built wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV's) until 20% of the total hackney carriage fleet is wheelchair accessible. A review of this element of the policy will be conducted in a years time or before if this target (20%) is achieved to check whether the policy has achieved the aim of ensuring better access to taxis for disabled passengers.

As at 1st January 2016, the total percentage of the hackney carriage fleet that is wheelchair accessible is 7.8%, an increase of 2.3% since the policy was introduced, but remaining short of the 20% figure that the Council desired.

Peter Embling the owner and operator of Greenway Travel Ltd has submitted a letter requesting that his company be exempted from the requirements to provide a wheelchair accessible vehicle. A copy of this letter is provided as Appendix 1.

Mr Embling submits in the letter that the ethos of his company is to provide a green alternative to conventional taxis by using the most suitable ultra low emission vehicles. He currently runs a fleet of 2 Toyota Prius vehicles. His company has been operating these particular vehicles since 2013 and we have had no problems with Mr Embling or his company in any respect.

Whilst, there is currently much development in electronic vehicles and the government continues to encourage their use. At the time of writing there are only two available electric or ultra low emission wheelchair accessible taxis. Details of these vehicles are included as Appendix 2. However, neither vehicle has sufficient range to enable it to be used successfully in a rural area such as South Somerset.

Financial Implications

None at this stage, however if an official application is made and refused there are the possible costs of appeal to Magistrates if the licence is refused.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

Jobs - We want a strong economy which has low unemployment and thriving businesses. If we are to agree this dispensation we will be continuing to support a growing local business

Environment - We want an attractive environment to live in with increased recycling and lower energy use. Supporting this proposal would fit well with this priority. Ultra low emission vehicles and in particular businesses that use them should be encouraged.

Other Implications

None

Background Papers: *Full Council 06/11/2014, South Somerset District Council –
Taxi Licensing Policy*
