



Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy Consultation

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Purpose of the Report

1. The Committee is asked to consider the outcome of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy consultation.

Public Interest

2. The Council has a Taxi and Private Hire licensing policy which sets out the requirements for applying for taxi/private hire badge, vehicle licences and private hire operators and how we make decisions when determining applications and enforcing licences and the legislation.
3. The policy is now due for review to ensure all current legislation, guidance and best practice is incorporated. The Policy has been updated to include statutory guidance, an update to the criminal convictions policy, wheelchair access vehicle requirements and environmental standards for new applications for licensed vehicles.
4. Part of the process for updating the policy involves consultation with the taxi and private hire trade, passengers and other stakeholders such as the Police.
5. The consultation phase has ended and the report is to publish the results of the consultation.

Recommendation

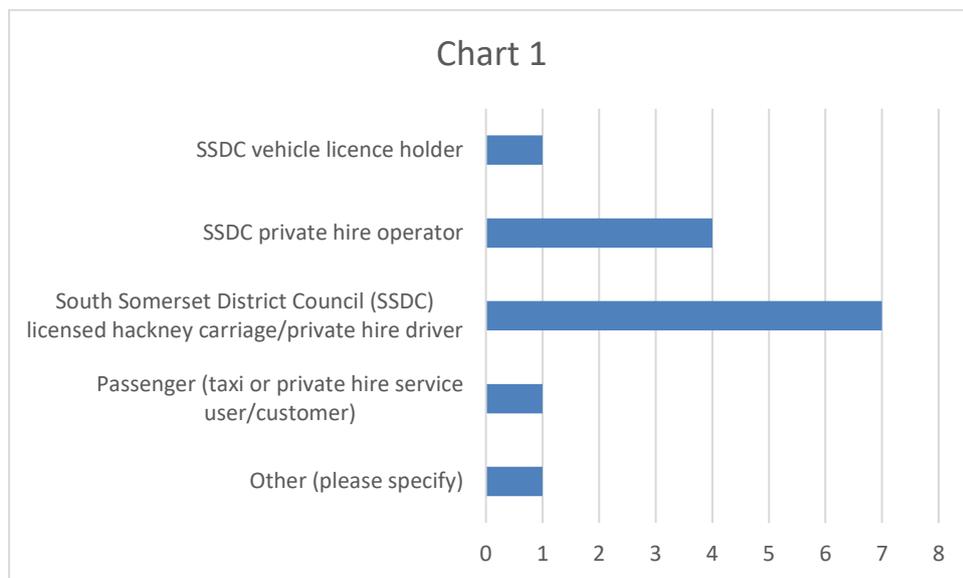
6. That the Licensing Committee:
 - Note the results of the consultation
 - Agree that no further revisions are required to the policy based on the consultation responses
 - Agree the proposed policy can be presented to Full Council for formal adoption

Background

7. The last Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy was approved in 2014 and implemented in 2015. The policy provides information and guidance to applicants, clarity for vehicle license holders, drivers and operators and informs the public on the way the Council will undertake its licensing functions. It is important that the policy is periodically reviewed to ensure it remains current.
8. Since the 2015 policy was adopted there have been updates to best practice and recently there has been a significant change with the introduction of statutory guidance. The existing policy also had a requirement for 20% of the hackney carriage vehicles to be wheelchair accessible but did not allow non-wheelchair accessible vehicles to be licensed without approval from the Licensing Committee when that percentage had been achieved. This revised policy now reflects these changes. In addition the policy has been restructured to allow for easier reading.
9. A report containing the draft policy was approved for consultation by the Licensing Committee on 13 July 2021. The consultation was published on the Council's consultation hub (Citizen Space) and commenced on 01 August 2021 and ended on 26 September 2021. In addition to this the consultation was sent to a number of consultees. A list of the consultees can be found in Appendix 1.

Report Detail – Consultation Results

10. The consultation comprised of the policy, details of the changes made to the policy and a questionnaire which focussed on views to do with the key changes. Respondents also had the opportunity to comment on any other aspect of the policy.
11. A total of 14 responses were received.
12. Respondents were asked to state if they were a private hire operator, vehicle licence holder, licensed hackney carriage or private hire driver, passenger or to provide a description of their role if none of the other categories applied. Chart 1 shows the breakdown of responses to this question. The majority of responses were from hackney carriage/private hire drivers. The person who responded 'other' specified that they are manage Great Western Railway taxi permits.



13. Reviewing the responses to the consultation in most questions there was a significant response in favour of the suggested policy or no opinion was offered. A detailed breakdown to all questions can be seen in Appendix 2.
14. The only questions where there was significant divided opinion were Question 6, Question 7 and Question 8.
15. Question 6 was suggesting a change from an age limit on private hire vehicles to applying the current EURO emission standard for new applications. Eight responses were in favour or had no opinion and six were not in favour of this change. It is worth noting that Question 5 asked the same question in relation to hackney carriage vehicles and in that question only two were not in favour of the change.
16. Of those not in favour, three were private hire operators and three were drivers. Of the three private hire operators two were in favour of applying the same policy to hackney carriage vehicles. Of the comments received one suggested this requirement may be expensive.
17. Officer recommendation is to not make any further changes to the proposed policy. In relation to the expense it will only relate to new vehicle licence applications and should not be a significant factor.
18. Question 7 was suggesting a change from requiring interim MOTs to vehicles under the age of 5 requiring a vehicle inspection at the time of application or renewal and having one MOT and vehicles over the age of 5 would require a vehicle inspection at the time of renewal.



19. In the existing policy, the number of tests is based on the mileage of the vehicle test. The minimum number of tests would be a vehicle test at Lufton plus the statutory MOT. For older vehicles the total number of MOTs can increase to three.
20. In the proposed policy the number of tests is based on the age of the vehicle for vehicles under 5 years the number of tests would be two (one vehicle test at Lufton plus the statutory MOT) this is a similar requirement to current lower mileage vehicles.
21. For vehicles over 5 years old, the proposed policy requires an additional Lufton vehicle inspection at the mid-point of the licence (around 6 months into the licence). This is change from requiring additional MOTs.
22. The cost of the Lufton test is currently £53. MOTs can vary from £30 to £54.85.
23. From the comments received two of those not in favour appear to have misunderstood the requirement as they have as they mentioned additional cost or need for additional testing. The requirement of the proposed policy is to change the emphasis in vehicles over 5 years from MOT testing to Lufton vehicle testing which is more comprehensive as opposed to increasing the number of tests required.
24. Officer recommendation is to not make any further changes to the proposed policy.
25. Question 8 was suggesting a change to the percentage of wheelchair accessible vehicles. The current policy requires that 20% of licensed hackney carriage vehicles are wheelchair accessible and the draft policy recommended an increase to 25% in line with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.
26. Seven responses were in favour or offered no opinion and seven responses were not in favour.
27. Respondents who were not in favour of the change were contacted to ask what percentage of wheelchair accessible vehicles they would like to see. One response was to keep it at 20%, one response wished to increase to 45% and the other did not offer an opinion.
28. Officer recommendation is to not make any further changes to the proposed policy and use the recommendation from the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

Financial Implications

29. There are costs in relation to the implementation of the policy and maintaining the policy requirements, in particular reminders, monitoring and enforcing the requirement for biannual DBS checks. These costs can be met from existing budgets as with the existing policy.

Council Plan Implications

30. This revised policy supports the Council Plan themes, in particular The Protecting Core Services and Environment Areas of focus

- Deliver a high quality, effective and timely service to our customers
- Enhance the quality of the environment and its resilience and ability to adapt to climate change in partnership with our communities and businesses

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

31. The environmental assessment toolkit has been used to consider carbon and climate implications of this report. Overall there are no negative carbon or climate change implications in adopting this policy.

32. This policy is primarily focused on ensuring public and vehicle safety for private hire and hackney carriage use in the district. By helping ensure a safe a taxi fleet this could help increase the use of public transport and reduce private vehicle use.

33. Whilst taxi vehicle use in itself will not be reduced, the policy does specifically include a requirement for new licensed vehicles to meet the current European Emission Standard. This will serve to ensure fuel use and emissions are reduced and air quality improved Whilst there is no current requirement for electric vehicles with use of renewable supplies, this will be considered in future as and when the market and infrastructure allow

34. There are no effects on the greenhouse gas emissions from the Councils own estate and operations.

Equality and Diversity Implications

35. A stage 1 Equality Analysis (EqA) was completed and agreed by the Equalities Officer and no further changes have been made to the policy which would affect this. This report does not pose any issue that would impact on any of the protected characteristics. An equality impact relevance check form can be found in Appendix 3.

Privacy Impact Assessment

36. The policy which is the subject of this report does not in itself involve the processing or handing of personal data. The processing of application forms in accordance with this policy currently involves the handling of personal data and no changes are being made to how that data is processed.



South Somerset
District Council

Background Papers

- South Somerset District Council - Taxi Licensing Policy and Guidance
- Taxi and Private Hire Policy (draft) report 13/07/21