

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL
LICENSING COMMITTEE
29 MARCH 2011**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976
TOWN POLICE CLAUSES ACT 1847**

LICENSING OF PURPOSE BUILT HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT.

- 1.1 To seek the approval of the Licensing Committee to permit the Head of Environmental Health Services to deal with the grant of purpose-built hackney carriage vehicle licences, normally referred to as London-type cabs, from up to 4 years old rather than the current three years, without the need for an independent mechanical inspection report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Currently, the hackney carriage fleet consists of a variety of vehicles, from purpose-built London-type cabs, to all types of standard saloon cars. The London-type cabs, are robust vehicles designed specifically for the taxi trade, and that has been recognised by this Committee in permitting an extension in the operating life of such vehicles to 12 years, which is 4 years longer than that of a standard saloon taxi.

A recent representation from the newly elected trade representatives for the St. David's Taxi Association (the trade body for hackney carriage proprietors), has highlighted the fact that the Council's current policy of not granting a licence for vehicles over 3 years old, has an indirect deterrent effect on the purchasing of London-type cabs, as there is a large second-hand market for ex-lease vehicles (leased by the manufacturers) that are available after standard 3 year leases have ended. They have asked whether the policy for the acceptable age of the vehicle can be extended from 3 to 4 years, without the need for an independent mechanical inspection report, to overcome this deterrent effect.

- 2.2 This class of vehicle is designed and built to last at least 12 -15 years and often are perfectly serviceable for some time after that, assuming good servicing and maintenance practices are adopted. It is appropriate to recognise the robust design of these London-type cabs and differentiate between them and standard saloon cars, as the Council has already done for the operating life of the vehicle.
- 2.3 Current policy allows for the Head of Environmental Health Services to re-licence all licensed vehicles including London-type cabs that are no more than 3 years old under delegated powers, with a discretion to licence up to 4 years old when supported by an independent mechanical inspection report. In the case of the London-type cabs, the requirement to produce an independent mechanical inspection is now considered to be an unnecessary burden upon the trade.
- 2.4 The removal of this deterrent effect is likely to encourage an increase in the numbers of London-type cabs within the hackney carriage fleet. London-type cabs are generally easily recognised by the public as taxis they can hail, and also offer good accessibility and a good standard of transportation; an increase in their numbers would be beneficial to potential users.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 To reduce the demand on resources involved in the organising of Sub - Committees; producing and circulating the reports and documents, attendance by officers and members required to attend Sub-Committee hearings it is proposed that future applications for the grant of licenses to applicants willing to provide London-type cabs that are no more than 4 years old at the time of licensing be dealt under delegated powers by the Head of Environmental Health Services.
- 3.2 All other applications for the grant of vehicle licenses which relate to a vehicle over 3 years old, other than a London-type cab, will be subject to the extant policy meaning that the applicants continue to be referred to a Licensing Sub-Committee unless the application is supported by an independent mechanical report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for the Council as all costs relating to the purchase of a vehicle belong to the applicant for the grant of the licence.
- 4.2 The trade representatives have advised that there are significant benefits to the trade if the policy is adopted, firstly in the removal of the cost of the independent mechanical inspection and secondly and more significantly in the reduced cost of available used London-type cabs that are on the market, and their likely growth within the fleet.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Licensing Committee adopt the proposal and allow the Head of Environmental Health Services under delegated powers to determine hackney carriage vehicle licenses relating to London-type cabs that are no more than 4 years, without the need for an independent mechanical inspection report.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended).

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None