

LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE - 2 NOVEMBER 2016

Present: Councillor Woodward (Chair);
Councillors Dennis, Ennis, Livingston, Skeats and Vickers.

Apologies: Councillors D Edwards, Grashoff and Page.

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 25 May and 28 September 2016 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

6. HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE EMISSION

Further to Minute 3 of the meeting held on 28 September 2016, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider and approve proposed changes to the existing emissions policy and introduce a phased upgrade to the Hackney Carriage vehicle fleet.

The report explained that under the Environment Act 1995, the Council had a duty to constantly review and assess the air quality within the Borough, and compare pollution concentrations against a set of European and National air quality standards. Monitoring had shown that Reading had areas where concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) were exceeding both European and national standards, and as such the Council had declared an Air Quality Management Area and implemented an Action Plan. The Council's Action Plan included proposals to investigate ways to reduce emissions for the local Hackney Carriage and Private Hire fleet.

The report stated that the Council had adopted the London Public Carriage Office (PCO) conditions of fitness as policy. This currently restricted the Hackney Carriage fleet to purpose built London Taxis International vehicles, the now out of production Metrocab or the Mercedes Vito taxi. The PCO currently had a Euro 5 emissions standard and 15 year age policy in place.

The technical details of each of the Euro standards were provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

The report explained previous policy decisions on Hackney Carriage vehicle emissions and proposed a new policy whereby:

- All Hackney Carriage Vehicles would be Euro 4 or equivalent by 1 October 2018
- All Hackney Carriage Vehicles would be Euro 5 or equivalent by 1 October 2021
- No Euro 5 or 6 Hackney Carriage vehicles were permitted to be over fifteen years old
- Hackney Carriage Vehicles that were ULEV (defined as emitting emissions that were 50% cleaner than the current average years models) or had been certified as having been repowered with an LPG/Petrol conversion kit to achieve emissions standards exceeding Euro 6 were permitted to be a maximum age of 20 years for 2 years as of the adoption of this policy
- Vehicles undergoing a conversion to exceed Euro 6 must have undergone a suitability compliance inspection by Council officers to ensure that the vehicle remained at a standard suitable for public carriage in the Reading Borough and undergo inspection by a specialist conversion company and be in receipt of confirmation that it was suitable for conversion

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The Committee noted that the move to Euro 4 or equivalent standard by 1 October 2018 would require up to 90 vehicles to be upgraded.

Attached to the report at Appendix I was an explanation of each of the Euro standards. Attached to the report at Appendix II was comments received on the proposal from members of the public and Hackney Carriage owners. A response to the proposal from the Council's senior technical officer responsible for emissions in Reading was attached to the report at Appendix III. A letter received from the Chair of the Reading Taxi Association was attached to the report at Appendix IV. Following the discussion at the previous Committee meeting about possible routes for external funding a senior environmental protection officer had submitted an update which was attached to the report at Appendix V.

Asif Rashid, Chairman of Reading Taxi Association, was present at the meeting and addressed the Committee. Mr Rashid asked the Committee to consider adopting an age policy of 15 years from 1 October 2018 rather than 2021 and an age policy of a maximum of 8 years from 1 October 2018 for all new to fleet vehicles.

Resolved - That the following emission standards for the licensed Hackney Carriage vehicle fleet be approved:

An age policy of 15 years shall be adopted from 1 October 2018

An age policy of a maximum of 8 years shall be adopted from 1 October 2018 for all new to fleet vehicles

Hackney Carriage Vehicles that were ULEV (defined as emitting emissions that were 50% cleaner than the current average years models) or had been certified as having been repowered with an LPG/Petrol conversion kit to achieve emissions standards exceeding Euro 6 were permitted to be a maximum age of 20 years, provided that such vehicles are either licensed or converted as set out above within 2 years as of 2 November 2016

Vehicles undergoing a conversion to exceed Euro 6 must have undergone a suitability compliance inspection by Council officers to ensure that the vehicle remained at a standard for public carriage in the Reading Borough and undergo inspection by a specialist conversion company and be in receipt of confirmation that it was suitable for conversion.

(That in accordance with Standing Order 38, Councillor Skeats requested that her vote against the resolution be recorded.)

7. REVIEW OF DRIVING STANDARDS AGENCY DRIVING TEST

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider an amendment to the current policy in respect of the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) testing of private hire and hackney

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carriage vehicle drivers to include equivalent driving standards testing provided by companies other than DVSA.

The report stated that as of 1 October 2016 the DVSA had stopped providing testing for private hire and hackney carriage drivers. Four companies had been identified that at present provided equivalent DVSA testing for drivers, there were: Blue Lamp Trust; Diamond Advanced Motoring; Green Penny; and Mann Fleet. Any company wishing to provide their services would be assessed against the current DVSA criteria for testing and as long as the criteria was deemed to be of an equivalent standard they would be permitted to test drivers suitability for licensing by the Council. A list of companies with equivalent driver training tests would be provided to driver licence applicants.

Resolved - That additional providers of an equivalent standard of driver testing to that of the current policy, be approved.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.32pm)