

Taxi Policy Review Update

Date: 26 March 2024
Agenda Item:
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Key Decision? **NO**
Local Ward Members N/A



Lichfield
District Council

**REGULATORY &
LICENSING
COMMITTEE**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 13 Dec 2024 this Committee approved the objectives for a review of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. These objectives covered a review of the age of vehicles, electric vehicles, wheelchair accessible vehicles, hackney carriage fares, enforcement, and policy accessibility. This report is to update the Committee as to subsequent progress and to propose a revised timeline for introducing a new policy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Following consultation with taxi drivers, to approve the inclusion of additional objectives for the review: a review of potential levers to increase the use of local vehicles by operators, window tints, and MOT and compliance tests.
- 2.2 To approve the revised timeline detailed at 3.4.
- 2.3 That the Assistant Director of Operations, Regulation and Enforcement retains the ability to make minor variations to the policy in consultation with the Chair of the Regulatory and Licencing Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 13 Dec 2024 the Committee expressed its desire that taxi drivers should have the opportunity to provide face to face feedback on potential changes to the policy. A workshop was therefore held on 13 February 2024 to which all licensed drivers were invited to attend.
- 3.2 Eight attended the meeting, including a representative from the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT). A summary of the areas the drivers would like to see reviewed can be found below:

Out of area drivers

Drivers expressed concern that operators licensed by this Council are giving jobs to drivers and vehicles licensed by other local authorities. It was suggested that operators could be obligated, through a licence condition, to have a minimum number of LDC licensed vehicles on their books or to use LDC licensed vehicles for a minimum percentage of their jobs.

Electric and hybrid vehicles

Drivers expressed concern that the infrastructure required to charge electric vehicles is limited in Lichfield district. Some of those who attended are engaged in regular journeys to airports, and stated electric vehicles are impractical in these circumstances as the destination cannot be reached without stopping to charge. The consensus was that electric and hybrid vehicles are more expensive and therefore a phased approach to their introduction, in line with the revised government deadline of 2035, would be appropriate. It was suggested that no new diesel or petrol vehicles be licensed after 2030. Drivers also proposed that the availability of a grant, loan or discount would encourage more drivers to switch to an electric or hybrid vehicle.

Vehicle age

Drivers overwhelmingly requested that consideration be given to increasing the age of vehicles that could be licensed, not least so that LDC remained competitive with other local authorities. Several proposals were made including allowing vehicles that are 8 or 10 years old to be granted a licence, and to hold that licence until they are 12 or 15 years old, with half yearly compliance tests after 5 years.

Window tints

Drivers suggested that the condition requiring a minimum of 70% light be admitted through all windows be replaced with a condition to require that window tints must not be altered from the manufacturer's specification. Currently, vehicles used for executive hire often have tints in rear windows that come as standard but exceed the minimum of 70% light condition.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles

Drivers suggested that it could be a condition of an operator's to have a minimum number of wheelchair accessible vehicles once they reach a particular threshold of vehicles on their books. Drivers also raised concerns that wheelchair accessible vehicles are considerably more expensive and that a financial incentive would encourage their use. Drivers were supportive of the idea of disability awareness training.

Fares

Drivers reiterated their desire that fares be reviewed but were mindful that they must avoid being priced out of the market by competitors licensed by other local authorities, and particularly those operating via Uber. It was suggested that yardage could be reviewed rather than the initial charge so that the cost increase is manageable for customers.

MOT and compliance test

Some drivers suggested LDC could move to requiring an MOT rather than a taxi compliance test, but others felt something extra would still be needed to check the interior and appearance of the vehicle.

- 3.3 Officers are conscious that adverse changes to the policy could push some existing licence holders to obtain a licence with another local authority, and still operate on a private hire basis in Lichfield District. This would lead to a reduction in the availability of hackney carriages and have an impact on the revenue available to provide the service. It is therefore important that fees remain competitive, and policy remains realistic and reasonable. Based on current numbers, annual revenue is forecasted to be:
- £10,728 from 147 drivers.
 - £25,908 from vehicles.
 - £1,402 from 18 operators.
- 3.4 The workshop was very helpful and identified some potential new objectives for review that could be incorporated into a future policy, and ideas that could be implemented to support the review of existing objectives. A revised timeline is therefore proposed:

- a. Committee agree formal review of policy 13 December 2023.
- b. Officers undertake an informal consultation with drivers.
- c. Committee agree revised objectives and timeline 26 March 2024.
- d. Officers investigate options and prepare new policy to present to Committee 18 Jun 2024.
- e. Formal consultation with stakeholders, including drivers, operators and the public. Minor amendments to policy made by officers, and major amendments agreed by the Assistant Director and Chair of the Committee.
- f. New policy approved by Cabinet Member and then adopted by full Council.

Alternative options	1. No change to current policy. This will fail to acknowledge concerns of drivers and mean the Council continues with an overly complex policy.
Consultation	1. Drivers have been consulted via a workshop on 13 February 2024. 2. Formal consultation would take place once a new policy is approved by Committee on 18 June 2024. This will be open to all; drivers, operators and the public.
Financial implications	1. No financial implications are anticipated as part of the review. Depending on the changes in the new taxi policy, it could result in pushing drivers to hold a licence issued by other LAs resulting in a loss of revenue to LDC. Revenue from taxi driver licences
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes
Legal implications	1. No legal implications are expected as part of the review. 2. This committee retains the ability to determine policy for hackney carriage and private hire policy as set out in Schedule 1 of The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes
Contribution to the delivery of the strategic plan	1. The licensing of taxi drivers and vehicles supports aims around enabling people, shaping places and developing prosperity.
Equality, diversity and human rights implications	1. It is anticipated that the review could lead to increased transport options for those with disabilities. 2. The EIA for the policy will be revised and updated once the review is undertaken.
EIA logged by Equalities Officer	No
Crime & safety Issues	1. It is anticipated that the outcome of the review will lead to reduced crime and increased safety.
Data assessment	N/A
Environmental impact (including climate change and biodiversity)	1. It is anticipated that the review could lead to increased use of electric vehicles and therefore reduce harmful emissions and improve air quality

GDPR / Privacy impact assessment	N/A
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	Risk description & risk owner	Original score (RYG)	How we manage it	New score (RYG)
A	Policy does not provide robust decision-making framework	Yellow	Checking against legislation, case law, guidance and standards	Green
B	Adverse response to any changes	Yellow	Consultation prior to any key changes	Green
C	Results in policy that is unworkable	Yellow	Benchmarking against the policy of other Council's	Green
D	New policy pushes drivers to hold a licence elsewhere, impacting on hackney carriage availability and revenue.	Yellow	Impact on drivers to be considered with each proposed change. Drivers and RMT rep have been informally consulted via a workshop and will be formally consulted once a draft policy is created.	Green
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Background documents	Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2022 Committee Meeting 13 Dec 2023
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Relevant web links	Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards
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