

LICENSING COMMITTEE



Report subject	Consideration of amendments to the BCP Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy
Meeting date	27 June 2023
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The purpose of this report is to consider recommended amendments to the current BCP Council Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy 2021, relating to the age of new or replacement vehicles at first licence and the maximum age of licensed vehicles.</p> <p>The BCP Taxi and Private Hire Trade association who represent the licenced trade have requested amendments in order to support current licence holders who are experiencing difficulties in sourcing and purchasing suitable vehicles which meet the current Policy requirements.</p> <p>At the Licensing Committee on 9 March 2023, it was recommended that officers meet with the trade representatives and discuss the issue in more depth. This discussion took place on 27 April. Following this, it was agreed to recommend amendments to the policy to support the purchase of new vehicles, as there are approximately 300 which need to be changed by the end of the year, in order to comply with Euro 6 emission standards.</p> <p>The recommendation within the report is also to remove the age restriction on wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) in order to encourage the purchase and licence of such vehicles to support passengers in wheelchairs. We currently have 60 (WAVs).</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>Members consider the proposed amendments and either;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Agree the proposed amendments as stated, orb) Agree amended proposals following consideration, orc) Maintain the current policy without any amendments.
Reason for recommendations	<p>At the Licensing Committee meeting on 9 March 2023 members considered a request by the BCP Taxi and Private Hire Trade Association to amend the current BCP Taxi and Private Hire Policy in relation to the age of all vehicles at first licence.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the issues relating to the age of</p>

	vehicles need to be considered in more depth and a further report should be presented once officers had undertaken further discussion with the Trade.
--	---

Portfolio Holder(s):	Kieron Wilson, Housing and Regulation
Corporate Director	Jess Gibbons, Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Nananka Randle, Licensing Manager
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. The current Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy came into force in June 2021. The policy sets out the requirements and standards for all new and existing licensed vehicles. This policy includes requirements to support the Council's commitment to climate change and environmental impacts.
2. The overarching objective for the taxi and private hire licensing regime is to protect the safety of passengers and other road users.
3. The current Policy can be viewed on the BCP Council website [BCP Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy \(bcpCouncil.gov.uk\)](https://bcpCouncil.gov.uk)
4. The Local Authority can review the policy and any changes, which are not considered significant can be made to the policy, without wider consultation.
5. Chapter 6 of the policy states the following:-
This policy is a working document, and the Licensing Authority reserves the right to alter and amend the policy as appropriate to correct errors, inconsistencies, clarify guidance, legislative changes and issue a revised version of the policy at any time. However, any significant changes to the Policy will only be implemented after a formal consultation process with the trade and public.
Any significant amendment is defined as one that:-
 - *Is likely to have a significant financial effect on licence holders or*
 - *Is likely to have a significant procedural effect on licence holders or*
 - *Is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the community*
6. The proposed amendments will not constitute a significant change to the policy, the proposals will have a positive financial impact on the taxi trade, there will be no procedural impact and this will have no adverse impact on the community and will provide a positive impact by ensuring the continued provision of locally licenced vehicles for our residents and visitors.
7. Following the Committee meeting on 9th March, Officers have met with the representatives from BCP Taxi and Private Hire Trade Association to discuss the licensing requirements for new and replacement vehicles and wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV's).

8. The current policy at paragraph 7.5 sets out the age and emission standards for all vehicles at first licence which must be *no more than 3.5 years old from the date of first registration and the vehicle engine emissions must meet euro 6 emission standard or higher (or other equivalent standard.)*
9. Paragraph 7.6 sets out the age and emission standards for WAV's which *must be no more than 4.5 years old from first the date of first registration, have no more than 50,000 miles on the clock and must meet euro 6 emission standard or higher (or other equivalent standard)*
10. Chapter 11 paragraph 11.1 sets out the maximum age at which a vehicle licence will be renewed which is 15 years from the age of first registration.
11. At the Licensing Committee meeting on 9 March 2023 the Taxi Trade representative explained that the disruption to the manufacture of new vehicles due to Covid, and the subsequent supply chain demands, have led to fewer suitable vehicles being available to purchase. The cost of used cars which are compliant with Euro 6 emission standards has increased due to the Ultra Low Emission Zones being introduced.
12. Previously the age of 3.5 years allowed for the purchase of ex-fleet vehicles, however the age and number of such vehicles which are available for sale, has reduced, making it much more difficult to purchase vehicles which will still meet the age requirement as set out in the existing policy.
13. The Taxi Trade also confirmed that licence holders are looking to move out of the BCP Council area and seeking licences in nearby Dorset Council area, as the requirements for vehicles are not as restrictive and offer a more financially viable option.
14. Dorset Council and New Forest District Council are the two closest Local Authority areas and currently they have no minimum or maximum age requirements for licenced vehicles. A comparison of other Local Authority vehicle requirements can be seen at Appendix 1 for information.
15. Officers met with Trade representatives on 27 April 2023 to consider the requirements for vehicles at first licence and the current maximum age limit.
16. Committee members at the meeting on 6 Mach confirmed that regardless of any proposed amendments to the ages of vehicles all new or replacement vehicles must continue to meet the Euro 6 emission standard in order to uphold our commitment to environmental impacts.
17. During the meeting with the Trade representatives, it was recognised that it would be beneficial to amend the requirements for WAV vehicles in order to provide an incentive to encourage them to be purchased by ensuring a differing standard at first licence from non WAV vehicles.
18. WAVs are more expensive to purchase as they are larger and there are fewer make and model options which will meet the required dimensions to be able to transport a reference wheelchair as set out within Schedule 1 of the Public Services Accessibility Regulations 2000.
19. Both officers and the Trade representatives agreed that to ensure standards of new and existing vehicles are maintained, and for new vehicles which are not WAV, an age limit will prevent very old and possibly already tired and worn vehicles from being purchased for new licences, which would not benefit the fleet

and would place additional pressure on the existing licensing team who have to approve new vehicle requests and provide advice to licence holders.

Proposed amendments.

20. To amend paragraph 7.5 to read as follows- ***All vehicles must be no more than 5 years of age from first registration with less than 60,000 miles and meet Euro 6 emission standard or higher.***
21. To amend paragraph 7.6 to read as follows - ***All WAVs must have no more than 100,000 miles on the clock and must meet euro 6 emission standard or higher (or other equivalent standard)***
22. To delete paragraph 11.1 which states ***From the date of this policy no licence will be issued for the renewal for any vehicle aged 15 years or older from the date for first registration***

Options Appraisal

23. Members are asked to consider the proposed policy amendments and either;
- a) Agree the proposed amendments, or
 - b) Agree amended proposals following consideration, or
 - c) Maintain the current policy without amendment.

Summary of financial implications

24. The Taxi Licensing function is financed through income from fees. With a decrease in vehicle licences, the income will reduce, which could impact on staffing levels and the ability of the service to maintain current standards.

Summary of legal implications

25. The proposed amendments are financially beneficial to the taxi trade and are not considered a significant change to the policy.

Summary of human resources implications

26. The delivery of the service will remain within existing staffing levels.

Summary of sustainability impact

27. The policy requires that all licenced vehicles will meet the current emission standard Euro 6 at first license and existing vehicles which do not meet this requirement will not be permitted to renew their licence after 31 December 2023.
28. Euro 6 emissions standards were introduced in September 2015 and are the sixth generation of emissions standards – preceded by Euro 1 to 5 – designed to reduce the harmful emissions from car and van exhausts.

Summary of public health implications

29. Vehicles that are licenced must meet the minimum emission standard which works to reduce harmful emissions including nitrogen oxide (NOx), carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and particulate matter (also known as soot from diesel engines).

30. These emissions can have a harmful effect on human beings by ensuring vehicle meet this standard or better we are reducing the harmful emissions being produced by the 900 licensed vehicles.
31. Euro 7 standards will replace Euro 6 during 2025 which is when the Policy will be reviewed again.

Summary of equality implications

32. An equalities impact assessment screening tool has been reviewed by the equalities panel on the 8th June and the panel accepted that there would be a positive impact from the proposed policy amendments on licence holders, and disabled passengers.

Summary of risk assessment

33. Not applicable

Background papers

The Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guidance
[Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice-guidance)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

Public Services Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2000/1970/schedule/1/made>

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Comparison of Local Authority Licensed Vehicle Requirements