

COMMITTEE: CENTRAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
DATE: 26 JANUARY 2009
TITLE: VARYING THE CONDITIONS OF HACKNEY / PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES
PURPOSE: FOR DECISION
AUTHOR: HEAD OF ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

BACKGROUND

At present, we have a condition on all vehicles that are licensed as hackney or private hire vehicles throughout the county, which means that they cannot be licensed once they reach 10 years of age.

We have received a request from the industry, asking the Council to consider increasing this to 12 years of age. See below the points that the Committee should consider when coming to a decision on this.

For information, the conditions of nearby councils vary, with Anglesey permitting up to 12 years of age, and Conwy having no maximum age, so far as the vehicle satisfies and complies with the remainder of the Council's conditions.

The reasons in favour of continuing with 10 years of age

- The Council has noted, in its transportation plan, the aspiration to raise the standards of the industry by aiming towards having an age restriction of seven years.
- These vehicles travel a substantial number of miles per annum, and although they are tested every six months, they can travel a substantial number of miles between the different tests.
- The body of the vehicle weakens over time and keeping in mind the mileage it travels, it is mandatory that we ensure public safety.

The reasons in favour of increasing the restriction to 12 years of age or for an unspecified period of time

- This is in keeping with the procedure in nearby counties.
- Taking the economic climate into account, increasing the age is of assistance to the industry.
- Because the restriction on the number of vehicles that were licensed in Arfon was lifted some years back, more vehicles have now been licensed in the Arfon area, which places more financial pressure on the individual licensee.

OFFICERS' OBSERVATIONS

Ideally, the aim would be to obtain a hackney and private hire industry where every vehicle is below 10 years of age; being below 7 years of age would be even more praiseworthy. However, in reality, particularly in the current economic climate, if we expect a sufficient provision of vehicles throughout the county to meet the demand at busy periods such as Friday and Saturday nights, we need to assist the vehicle owners

in one way or another. A means of doing this would be to increase the age and as a service, we are confident that two mechanical tests per annum ensures, so far as we can say, that the vehicles continue to be safe. We feel that increasing the age to 12 is a reasonable compromise and we are more supportive of this suggestion at the moment, rather than abolishing the age restriction altogether. Nevertheless, the option of increasing the age further could be an option, so far as the vehicles receive three or more mechanical inspections per annum.

It is also recommended that one other condition be added, namely that any vehicle that is newly licensed, should the age be increased to 12 or more, should be no more than 6 years of age when it is licensed for the first time. Once again, this is in keeping with Anglesey and it ensures that all the vehicles are not older vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee considers the various options in terms of the condition relating to the age of hackney and private hire vehicles.