

Report to: **Licensing and Enforcement Committee**



Date of Meeting: 3rd September 2020

Public Document: Yes

Exemption: None

Review date for release None

Subject: Covid-19 Temporary Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Policy

Purpose of report: The Licensing and Enforcement Committee is asked to note the Emergency Covid-19 Taxi Policy and seeking approval of this committee to end adoption of the policy.

Recommendation: **That the Committee;**
1. Notes temporary adoption of the Emergency Covid 19 Policy introduced in April 2020 (Appendix A) and
2. Approves continuing use, in conjunction with the full taxi policy, until further review by this committee at a later date.

Reason for recommendation: Policy was adopted through emergency measures at the outset of the Coronavirus pandemic to support the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade in East Devon to continue operating economically and efficiently, with the purpose being to end adopted use of this policy

Officer: Steve Saunders, Licensing Manager (Governance and Licensing)

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment

Financial implications: There are no financial implications.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications requiring comment.

Equalities impact: Low Impact

Climate change: Low Impact

Risk: Comments
Low Risk

[Click here to enter text on risk considerations relating to your report.](#)

Links to background information:
 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
 Urgent Senior Officer Decision Report 7 April 2020

Link to [Council Plan](#): Choose Priorities and delete what not appropriate.
Outstanding Place and Environment

Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

1 Main Body of the Report

1.1 The commencement of the Covid-19 pandemic introduced legislative changes with the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the Health Protection (Business Closure) Regulations 2020 coming into force. Those changes impacted on the hackney carriage (taxi) and private hire trade adversely as a result of the country going into lockdown that saw businesses, garages, medical surgeries and similar being required to close. That not only reduced the amount of custom and use of taxi and private hire vehicles but also prevented access for current licence holders to services and businesses that are necessary to renew driver and vehicle licences.

1.2 The new legislation and government guidance required emergency amendments to the Council's current hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy that allowed the Council to properly respond when considering;

-) Vehicle MOT's,
-) Compliance tests,
-) Use of SORN,
-) Vehicle Insurance cover,
-) Driver/vehicle licence renewals and,
-) Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

1.3 Emergency amendments to current taxi policy under **Appendix A** detailed the response in support of the challenges faced by the hackney carriage and private hire trade in East Devon. The amendments did not replace the legislation governing hackney and private hire operations and licence holders still had to comply with the requirements of the Council's existing policy.

1.4 The emergency amendments to policy were approved through an Urgent Senior Officer Decision procedure with the approval of the Chair of Licensing and Enforcement and the Leader of the Council. That course of action promptly reinforced responsibilities for drivers, proprietors, operators and licence holders ensuring that licensed vehicles remained safe and roadworthy and that licenced drivers maintained their 'fit and proper' status for holding a licence.

1.5 Acknowledging that public safety is always paramount, officers sought urgent changes using Senior Officer Urgent Decision during the period when all Council meetings were postponed under the Coronavirus Act 2020. The purpose of this report now is to fully inform and to brief this committee of the details and content of the emergency taxi policy.

2 Conclusion

2.1 The steps introduced under 1.2 above in the emergency taxi policy have generally eased but still being a need for the temporary policy and officers seek approval for it to remain in being, until the earliest time of this committee next meeting on 18th November 2020 when further consideration of the need can be given. It was always intended that officers would revert the procedures when the time is appropriate.

2.2 The Licensing Manager wishes to pass on thanks to members for acting swiftly in implementing the temporary policy and at such a critical time earlier this year.