

PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENSING POLICY

Further to our recent discussion would it be possible for the council to review the following parts of the above policy which are imposing financial pressures on the Private Hire Operators listed below:

1. Driving experience for new drivers

Currently the policy states that a driver's licence will not be granted to anyone who has not held a full driving licence for a period of three years.

Whilst it is appreciated that the council can impose its own requirements to determine whether an applicant is fit and proper this requirement is a lot more more onerous than the basic requirements laid down in Section 51 of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, which stipulates that the council must not grant a licence to any person who has not held a full licence for twelve months. This requirement is making it difficult to recruit new drivers to meet business demands.

We cannot recollect why this additional two years requirement was introduced but it is now causing us problems in recruiting new drivers with Stockton Council and is one of the reasons operators are looking for alternatives like taking out licences with other councils e.g. Wolverhampton, where requirements are less onerous.

As the Council also requires new applicants to have passed The Tees Valley Taxi Assessment Driving Test and its own local knowledge test and has robust procedures in place to deal with driving standards complaints and convictions could it not now be considered reasonable to reduce the full driving licence requirement to twelve months as per the basic legal requirement?

Making entry into the taxi trade easier will not only help relieve the financial pressures on operators but will also encourage them to obtain licences from Stockton Council.

If it is not considered appropriate to change policy at this time could you please advise us why this policy requirement is considered necessary.

2. Age Restriction for new Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles

From 1 January 2020 the policy will require that applications for new vehicle licences will only be considered if the vehicle is no older than five years from the date of first registration.

The introduction of this age limit is also having a financial impact on us as fleet operators who have already carried out financial forecasts on both the projected need for the replacement of existing vehicles and the licensing of new vehicles.

The additional work forecast from the opening of the new hotel has not materialised and the Globe is still yet to open. The Council is therefore requested to reconsider the financial impact these changes are/ will have on existing licence holders and in the current economic climate to either defer the introduction of this requirement or to allow existing licence holders a longer phasing in period to comply with a new age limits. Alternatively the age requirement could be extended to vehicles that are seven years old from the date of first registration which would reduce the cost burden for replacement vehicles.

Another alternative to consider would be to bring Stockton's policy in line with neighbouring authorities of Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland who all permit the licensing of category C and D insurance write off vehicles, subject to satisfactory engineers

reports. Stockton's policy does not permit such vehicles to be licensed. This policy enables vehicles up to three years of age to be purchased at greatly reduced prices. The legislative changes on cross border hirings enables operators with multiple licences in neighbouring authorities to use vehicles licensed in a different authority, including insurance write offs cat C and cat D, to carry out work in Stockton and we are not aware of any complaints or other issues resulting from this.

The council has robust requirements and procedures relating to the standards and testing of vehicles and we therefore consider that making these changes will have no detrimental impact on vehicle quality.

As with our comments in respect of driver's licences we also believe that making access to Stockton vehicle licences easier will be an incentive to persuade applicants away from applying to alternative councils like Wolverhampton.

Whilst this letter only represents the views of the three companies listed below we are aware that other operators have similar concerns and will be making their own separate representations.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Regards

StationCars
Skyline
Teeside Cars Ltd

Tees valley cabs Ltd