

REPORT FOR DECISION

MEETING:	LICENSING & SAFETY PANEL
DATE:	23rd JULY 2020
SUBJECT:	REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE TESTS IN LIGHT OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC
REPORT FROM:	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS)
CONTACT OFFICER:	MR M BRIDGE
TYPE OF DECISION:	COUNCIL
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is in the Public Domain.
SUMMARY:	
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>Members are requested to consider all of the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That all interim tests scheduled between 1st July and 30th September be put back by three months. • All Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles licences that have previously had a three month extension be put back by a further three months (Previously expired between 1st April 2020 and 30th June 2020) • All Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles expiring between the 1st July 2020 and the 31st March 2021 be put back by 3 months. • Refuse the all the proposed extensions as outlined above.

IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	The cost of the proposal is a loss of income of £50k and will need to be managed as part of the Council's financial strategy. The government is making funding available to local authorities to reflect loss of funding however the level of government funding made available will not cover all costs and loss of income associated with COVID-19.
Statement by Executive Director of Operations:	The cost of the licensing function are funded through the fees and charges levied by the Council.
Equality/Diversity implications:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comments
Are there any legal implications?	Under the legislation the Council is required to determine applications. The report is in accordance with the appropriate legislation.
Staffing/ICT/Property:	None
Wards Affected:	All
Scrutiny Interest:	Internal Scrutiny Panel

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Executive Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Operational decision reference 185 suspended the testing of licensed private hire and hackney carriage vehicles by 3 months between the period of 31st March and the 30th June 2020, the licensing service have moved all scheduled interim and renewal tests back by three months. This was approved on the 26th March 2020.
- 1.2 The Licensing Service have calculated that up to the 30th June 2020 we have 284 vehicles licences (266 Private Hire and 18 Hackney Carriages) that are expiring that will require inspection at Bradley Fold.

- 1.3 Vehicle proprietors will be required to renew their licences would still be required to be made to the Council before their extended current licence expires and pay the requisite fee. Confirmation of the application would be confirmed by notice/letter to say that it had been extended.
- 1.4 On the 14th July 2020, a meeting of the Emergency Powers Group considered an urgent decision report relating to request to extend all current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licences by 3 months beyond their current expiry date which are due for renewal between the dates 1/7/2020 and 31/3/2021 and to move forward by 3 months all 6 monthly scheduled interim vehicle tests scheduled between 1/7/20 to 30/9/20. This decision was to be implemented with immediate effect.

2.0 ISSUES

- 2.1 Following the decision of the Emergency Powers Group on the 14th July 2020, the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Council in consultation with the Executive Director reviewed the decision and raised concerns due to the ambiguity of the report and requested that this matter be referred to the Licensing and Safety Panel for consideration on the 23rd July 2020.
- 2.2 The Licensing Service have reviewed the concerns raised and would like the members of the Licensing and Safety Panel to consider the options contained in this report.
- 2.3 The justification and rationale for the requirement of the additional report, is that the April to June renewals have fallen at a time of peak lockdown and when the trade was worst affected though lack of income. By adding an additional 3 month extension to this group, the vehicle renewals and tests will move to October to December, when the trade will have increased and so vehicle proprietors will be in a better financial position to pay the relevant fees. The Council has made it clear from the start of this crisis that we would do everything in our power to help those worst affected, and this change for this cohort seeks to do just that.
- 2.4 The proposal will cause a peak in demand between October and December on the Licensing Service and Bradley Fold. The Council will need to explore options for how we deal with this peak so all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle tests and renewals can be carried out in this period without causing delay or financial hardship to the drivers. This may incur additional costs such as overtime may be needed to deal with this increased workload.
- 2.5 The Licensing Service would like to make members aware that by extending these vehicle licences will mean that some of the vehicles will not have been tested for 9 and 12 months respectively.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Licensing Service have calculated that the extension of these Hackney Carriage and Private hire vehicle licences will cause there to be a loss of income during the 2020/2021 municipal year of £50,220 (£30,420 for the Licensing Service and £19,800 for Bradley Fold).

3.2 This is due to the vehicle renewals that expire in January, February and March 2021 will be put back by three months so it will take them into the next financial year.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Members are requested to consider all of the following options:-

- That all interim tests scheduled between 1st July and 30th September be put back by three months.
- All Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles licences that have previously had a three month extension be put back by further three months (Previously expired between 1st April 2020 and 30th June 2020)
- All Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles expiring between the 1st July 2020 and the 31st March 2021 be put back by 3 months.
- Refuse the all the proposed extensions as outlined above.

List of Background Papers:-

Urgent Decision Report and Minutes – Emergency Powers Group -14th July 2020

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