

Runnymede Borough Council

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

9 April 2008 at 8.10 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors D W Parr (Chairman), Mrs P I Broadhead (Vice-Chairman), R J Edis, Mrs E Gill and C Knight.

Members of the Committee absent: None.

Councillor R N Jones also attended.

640. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 January 2008 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

641. FINANCIAL MONITORING STATEMENT

(Ref: Minutes of Regulatory Committee, January 2008, page 695, para. 492)

The Committee received the latest budgetary position for the services under the remit of the Regulatory Committee. These pertained mainly to Taxi Licensing.

Members noted that a savings target of £5,000 had been set for 2009/10 and that as there was more control over income for Regulatory services the scope for achieving that level of savings was considered to be more manageable than for Licensing.

However, the Committee was mindful of the fact that setting fees and charges for Hackney Carriages and Private Hire was market sensitive and as such it was content with those currently in place. Officers continued to monitor the situation closely and responded to feedback from the trade where appropriate.

642. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS AND VEHICLES STANDARDS AND CONDITIONS

(Ref: Minutes of the Regulatory Committee, June 2006, page 93, para. 104, November 2006, page 565, para. 382 and April 2007, page 1101, para. 649)

The Committee reviewed the vehicle age limits of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles following a meeting of the Drivers' Forum and considered the standard conditions in respect of the requirement to carry a spare wheel in circumstances where one was not supplied or available from the manufacturer.

Members recalled that setting and consideration of relaxing vehicle age limits had been discussed on three previous occasions in response to feedback from the trade; noting the current position as set out below:

	Initial Vehicle Licence	Final Renewal of Licence
22 June 2006	10 years	10 years
From 1 April 2007	5 years	9 years
From 1 April 2008	4 years	7 years
From 1 April 2009	3 years	6 years

It was agreed that if the age limit of vehicles was to be relaxed a further year at both ends of the scale it would be both beneficial to drivers and would not unduly compromise the safety and service to the public.

In effect, the changes would result in keeping what would already have been achieved during the year commencing 1 April 2008, and allowing vehicles to retire from public service the day before the anniversary of the eighth year from registration with the Department for Transport.

Officers confirmed they had compared the vehicle age limits set by other local authorities in Surrey and consulted members of the trade who appeared to be largely content with the proposals.

Members took legal advice which was to look into drawing up some criteria against which vehicles could be assessed so that exceptions in certain circumstances to the age limits could be made on a case by case basis, where the vehicle could be defined as 'immaculately maintained'.

It was also noted that the Department for Transport's Best Practice Guidance advised that setting too rigid an age limit might be considered inappropriate and thus vulnerable to legal challenge.

Members were hesitant to endorse the Euro NCAP 4 star system of testing vehicles adopted by another local authority so a fairly rigid but clear set of criteria would have to be agreed. This would be the subject of a further report to the next meeting of the Committee in June.

In respect of the requirement to carry a spare wheel, the changes in technology were discussed and Members agreed that cars fitted with a 'space saver' spare wheel or some other alternative device were acceptable to be licensed as hackney carriages or private hire vehicles as long as they met the standard conditions in other respects.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the requirement for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles to be normally less than 4 years of age from the date of first registration on their initial licence and normally less than 7 years old on their final year of licence, but allowing vehicles to be further licensed until the day before the anniversary of their 8th year of registration, be approved;**
- ii) any cars fitted with an 'alternative device' by the manufacturer as a substitute to a spare wheel, and which meet the standard conditions in other respects be eligible to be licensed as a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle;**
- iii) the Standard Conditions for Licensed Vehicles be amended accordingly; and**
- iv) Officers be instructed to submit a further report to this Committee concerning the introduction of further exceptions to vehicle age limitations in exceptional circumstances, on vehicles which are classed as 'immaculately maintained'.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.26 p.m.)