

**REPORT FROM: PLANNING, BUILDING CONTROL & LICENSING SERVICES
MANAGER**

TO: TAXI LICENSING & OTHER LICENSING COMMITTEE

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AGE LIMIT OF LICENSED VEHICLES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider a request to remove the age limit of licensed vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 That no changes are made to the age limit of taxis
- 2 That any proposed change to the age limit be referred to the Executive

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1 In order to ensure that taxis are in a suitable condition for use and to protect public safety
- 2 In order for the Executive to consider the changes.

BACKGROUND

1. At the last meeting there was a discussion about whether to remove the age limit of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles and to look at how other authorities use conditions to monitor their vehicles, where no age limit applies.
2. The current age limit for our licensed vehicles is up to a maximum of seven years when first licensed. A licensed vehicle can continue to be licensed until they reach nine years of age. For wheelchair accessible vehicles the corresponding times are seven through to twelve years of age.
3. Taxi tests are carried out once a year for vehicles one to three years old, twice a year for vehicles over three years old and for a vehicle failing on serious faults three times a year until it has passed three consecutive tests with no faults. This also applies to spot checks.
4. These age limits were introduced in 2009 due to the high number of vehicles failing spot checks. This continues to be the case with 93% of vehicles on the last test failing. This is a

significant failure rate and a cause for concern in terms of public safety

5. The last spot check carried out in June of this year resulted in thirteen vehicles being tested with twelve of those being immediately taken off the road due to mechanical faults. Only one vehicle passed.
6. Consideration to extending the age limit was last considered by the Executive in July 2014 where it was agreed that the current age limit be retained.

ISSUES

7. The Hackney Carriage Driver's Association has requested removal of the age limit.

AGE LIMITS IN EAST LANCASHIRE AUTHORITIES

Authority	Age Limit	Additional conditions applied
Blackburn	No age limit	None – tested every 6 months.
Burnley	Saloons and small MPVs – no lower age limit and licence to 8 years Large MPVs and minibuses – 5 to 10 years Wheelchair accessible, large MPVs and minibuses – 5 to 12 years Hackney carriage black cabs – 3 to 12 years	N/A
Chorley	No age limit	All vehicles required to meet same standards regardless of age – currently being reviewed.
Fylde	Up to 12 years for all vehicles	One test a year.
Hyndburn	7 to 10 years	Three tests per year from 8 years old. Hackneys must have a swivel seat.
Lancaster	No age limit	Any vehicle over 10 years must be in outstanding condition and must be inspected and approved by licensing officers – then tested every 4 months.
Preston	No age limit	None – tested twice a year.
Ribble Valley	No age limit	Tested three times a year when over 7 years old.
Rossendale	7 to 10 years, minibuses and purpose built hackney carriages up to 12 years	Tested twice a year and minibuses/purpose built hackney carriages three times a year.
South Ribble	Saloons 4 to 8 years and purpose built/minibuses 6 to 12 years.	None
West Lancs	Private hire 6 to 15 years and HC all wheelchair accessible 4 to 18 years.	None
Wyre	No age limit	All vehicles required to meet same standards regardless of age – tested once a year.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

8. The principle concerns in relation to any change is whether or not the age limit is necessary in order to protect public safety and provide the public with an acceptable quality of vehicles.
9. Different Councils have a range of policies in place. They also however have different standards of vehicles that are encountered. The Vosa inspector, who carried out the last inspection, indicated that vehicle maintenance from the inspections he had undertaken elsewhere were in his opinion better than he was encountering in Pendle.
10. We are concerned that increasing the age limit will further erode the quality of the vehicles that is being encountered in Pendle presently. The last inspection was not untypical of previous ones where vehicle maintenance was at an unacceptably low level. The concern is that by allowing older, and by definition, more well used vehicles to be licensed that the quality of vehicles, already a cause for concern, will erode even further.
11. The suggestion would be that the age limit be considered to be altered if future inspections reveal that there is a general improvement in maintenance which would give some assurance that allowing older vehicles would not compromise safety and the customer experience.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The age limit for a saloon vehicle is no older than seven years when first licensed through to nine years of age. For wheelchair accessible vehicles no older than seven years when first licensed through to twelve years of age.

Financial: None arising directly from the report.

Legal: None arising directly from the report.

Risk Management: None arising directly from the report.

Health and Safety: None arising directly from the report.

Sustainability: None arising directly from the report.

Community Safety: None arising directly from the report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising directly from the report.

APPENDICES

None.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None