

# LICENSING REGULATORY COMMITTEE

## Current Vehicle Testing Procedure for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles

5<sup>th</sup> June 2014

### Report of Licensing Manager

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform members of the current vehicle testing procedure in relation to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and ask them to consider whether any other options should be explored.

**The report is public**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Members are asked to consider whether they are happy to endorse the current vehicle testing procedures for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, or whether other options should now be explored and reported back to this Committee at a later date.**

##### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At the February meeting of the Licensing Regulatory Committee, members resolved that a report be brought to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the revenue raised through MOTs carried out by the Vehicle Maintenance Unit (VMU).
- 1.2 The cost of the test is set to recover the recharge from VMU to Licensing. This is incorporated in the licence/test fees charged, and the current cost of the test works out at £51.50. Vehicle owners are charged £51.50 within the licensing fee for the test, and as such, revenue is not raised through MOT's carried out by the Vehicle Maintenance unit (VMU)
- 1.3 Members will be aware that all hackney carriage and private hire vehicles that are licensed by this authority are subject to a test at the council's Vehicle Maintenance Unit (VMU) at White Lund, before a licence can be issued. The vehicles are then issued with a compliance certificate which exempts them from requiring an MOT certificate whilst the vehicle is a licensed vehicle.
- 1.4 Members may also be aware that the frequency of the required test varies dependent on the age of the vehicle. Any vehicle over the age of 2 years is subject to 2 tests per year and any vehicle over the age of 10 years is subject to 3 tests per year. This works very well at the moment as the VMU can issue certificates in accordance with

the above timescales, so there is no ambiguity as to whether a licence has expired or is still in force. The VMU centre contact the licensing department to let them know which vehicles have passed and which have failed, thus ensuring that plates and signage can be made as quickly as possible. It also ensures that licensing officers are aware that a vehicle has failed its test and should therefore not be used to transport members of the public.

- 1.5 The mechanics at the VMU are also aware of the conditions in relation to vehicle specifications required and will fail a vehicle if it does not meet the required vehicle specification or contact licensing to clarify any queries they may have.
- 1.6 Recently the Chair of the Lancaster City Hackney Carriage Proprietors Association has questioned whether having the vehicles all tested at the council VMU is the most efficient and cost effective way of dealing with vehicle tests. In particular the fee charged has been questioned and comments have been made that other garages could do the test for a lower cost. The figure quoted by the association was £45 per test, a saving of £6.50.
- 1.7 In officers' opinion this would not result in a saving as it would lead to further administrative work and officer time the cost of which would have to be reflected in the licence fee.
- 1.8 As set out above there is a very good process in place at the moment which works extremely well due to the knowledge of the mechanics and the co-operation between the VMU centre and the licensing department. The vehicle testing is currently consistent and all vehicles are tested to the same high standard.
- 1.9 The representation from the LCHPA was in relation to cost cutting. However the licensing authority must consider public safety as a priority and ensure that the vehicle tests are consistent and reliable.
- 1.10 If the vehicles were tested at independent garages they would be required to be presented to the Council's VMU following that MOT test to ensure that they complied with the vehicle specification as required by this council. There would be a cost associated with this. The MOT certificate may not reflect the licence length and this would lead to extra administrative work to ensure that the vehicle was covered by an MOT at all relevant times.
- 1.11 Because the compliance certificate issued by the VMU centre is not registered on line with VOSA, there is currently an issue that has been raised by some members of the trade, as they cannot tax their vehicles on line. Although there are plans to scrap the paper tax disc which is displayed in a car windscreen, vehicle owners will still be able to go to the Post Office and tax their vehicles. This issue has only been raised by a very small minority of the trade. In any case officers feel that this problem is not insurmountable and options of registering the compliance certificate should be explored.
- 1.12 Any decision should be based on public safety rather than convenience.
- 1.13 In 2010 when the Rules, Regulations and Procedures were updated, consideration was given to changing the procedure for vehicle testing and to allowing the proprietors to take the vehicle for an MOT to a garage of their choice. It was pointed out at that time that the vehicles would still need to be checked at the council's VMU centre.

1.14 This matter was discussed at the Taxi Liaison Group and those present indicated at that time that they would not be happy with this change as it could lead to a drop in standards and no consistency, with some people possibly having below standard tests carried out.

1.15 Members at that time considered the representations and the comments made and resolved that there would be no change to the vehicle testing.

## **2.0 Conclusion**

2.1 Members are asked to consider whether they are happy with the current system in place for vehicle testing or whether other options should be explored

2.2 Officers would not recommend any change at this time as the current system works well and ensures that standards are consistent. The standard of vehicles licensed by this authority is very high.

2.3 If members are minded to consider other procedures in relation to vehicle testing officers would recommend that a full consultation is carried out with all vehicle proprietors before any such change is seriously considered.

<b>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b> <b>(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</b>
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None arising from this report.

<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
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There are no financial implications of continuing to use the VMU as the cost of the test is recharged to the vehicle owner within the licensing fee. If other options were to be explored the costs of administering these would need to be identified and reported back as part of a future report.

<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>
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None arising from this report

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
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