

MINUTES OF	WORKING GROUP ON DIFFERENTIAL AGE LIMITS FOR LICENSED VEHICLES
MEETING DATE	Thursday, 22 February 2018
COUNCILLORS PRESENT:	Councillors David Wooldridge (Chair), Mary Green, Claire Hamilton and Harry Hancock
OFFICERS:	Andy Glover (Interim Licensing Manager), Stephanie Fairbrother (Licensing Officer) and Andy Houlker (Senior Democratic Services Officer)
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP:	Suzie Jones (Disability Equality North West), David Cox (Taxi Trade) and Scott Washington (Taxi Trade)
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1 Welcome and Introduction

Councillor David Wooldridge (Chair) welcomed those present and those present introduced themselves.

In addition to Councillors the working group included two representatives from the Trade and a representative from Disability Equality North West.

The working group had been created by the Council following strong representations by the Trade regarding the Council's differential age limit for licensed saloon and wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV).

2 Terms of Reference

The working group considered its terms of reference which included purpose, membership and objectives.

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That the working group's terms of reference be noted.

3 South Ribble & Other Lancashire District Councils' Current Licensed Vehicle Age Policy

As background information to assist deliberation, the working group had been provided with information on this Council's current age limit policy, a brief outline of other Lancashire authorities' approach and, government guidance on age limits.

4 Round Table Discussion

The working group had a round table discussion considering the following points:

- a) Traditional / historic reasons for SRBC's differential age policy
- b) Advantages / disadvantages of current SRBC approach
- c) How would we want to change the current SRBC stance:
 - Align saloons with WAV
 - Align WAV with saloons
 - Other age limits
 - No age limits
 What benefits would the above bring?
- d) Identify Working Group's preferred option

The rationale for the Council's differential age limit (saloon/WAV) was unclear. It appeared to centre on previous limitations on different available types of such vehicles, which unless purpose built had tended to be side loading minibuses. When different types of WAV became available allowing rear loading and approved by the Council, the Council's age limit policy was not updated.

The current position/policy was clear and consistent. However, it was now seen as out of date/in appropriate/discriminatory.

The working group generally felt that whilst wanting to retain a quality modern fleet and upholding the safety of the public was paramount there should be a change.

The working group considered and discussed in detail

- Align saloons with WAV
- Align WAV with saloons
- Other age limits
- No age limits

The group was conscious of the information on how other Lancashire authorities approached this. However, it was not known how/why they had reached that position.

Whilst tabled and advocated by a member of the Trade (as vehicles had to have a stringent test every 6 months), it was felt that no age limit was not an acceptable option. Also there was always be cut-off point with any age limit. It was felt this would probably undermine having a quality modern fleet and the paramount requirement of upholding the safety of the public.

It was felt that the Council's current age limits were within the range of those in Lancashire and there was no desire to reduce / increase from those.

The alignment of the vehicle age limit for licensed saloons and WAVs appeared to be the way forward bearing in mind vehicle developments since the Council had introduced it age limit policy a number of years ago.

Whilst aligning the age limit of licensed WAVs with that currently for saloon vehicles would create a newer fleet, it was felt that benefit was outweighed by being too financially onerous on the Trade. This not only related to the purchase of vehicles but also bore in mind competition from other operators across the county who might not be subject to a vehicle age limit.

To align the age limit of licensed saloon vehicles with WAVs was considered to be an acceptable option. Whilst not necessarily creating a newer fleet it would be

contained to the upper age limit already adopted by the Council. It created equality within the licensed fleet. The working group felt that this option would maintain a quality modern fleet and uphold the paramount requirement of the safety of the public.

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That the alignment of the age limit of licensed saloon vehicles with WAVs (6 years on application and up to 12 years on renewal) be recommended to the General Licensing Committee at its meeting on 10 April 2018.

5 Next Steps

RESOLVED (Unanimously): that

1. a further meeting of the working group was not required;
2. a report recommending the alignment of the age limit of licensed saloon vehicles be with that for WAVs (6 years on application and up to 12 years on renewal) be submitted to the General Licensing Committee at its meeting on 10 April 2018 with a view that the amended policy be recommend to full Council; and
3. this be included as an item for discussion at the next meeting of the Taxi Trade Forum on 3 May 2018.

Chair

Date