

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE

DECISION

meeting date: TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 2024
title: ELAP SEATS AND WHEELCHAIR ACCESS PROVISION
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: STEPHEN BARKER, SOLICITOR

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee of the outcome of consultation on provision of Hackney Carriages which are wheelchair accessible; on retention of the requirement for 8 Hackney Carriages to be licensed with a requirement for fitting of an ELAP seat; on any replacement of a vehicle with an ELAP seat to be by a side entry wheelchair accessible vehicle; and on introduction of disability awareness training on renewal of drivers' licence.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives }
 - Corporate Priorities }
 - Other Considerations }
- Consideration of these issues will promote the Council's aim to be a well managed authority supporting all members of the community.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting on 30 January 2024, Committee authorised the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to consult with the trade and all interested or affected parties on proposed amendment to the Council's policy for licensing Hackney Carriage drivers and vehicles. Private Hire operators, drivers and vehicles ("the Policy") in respect of wheelchair accessible and ELAP seat provisions and disability awareness.

2.2 Consultation has taken place with interested parties and the trade by distribution of the questionnaire and supporting material at Appendix 1.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Responses have been received from 8 Hackney Carriage drivers and two Private Hire drivers. There has not been any response from representatives of groups of users. Those responses are set out in Appendix 2. The responses are varied in their tone, but overall:

- Do not consider that ELAP seats are required as they are barely used;
- Do not express a wish for expansion of the side entry wheelchair accessible Hackney fleet by 5 more vehicles, due to a lack of work;
- Do not support the replacement of any ELAP seat vehicles by side entry wheelchair accessible Hackney vehicles;
- Give a mixed reception to the introduction of disability awareness training on licence renewal, varying from full support to outright rejection, with an intermediate view that it is appropriate for drivers of vehicles which have ELAP seats or are wheelchair accessible.

3.2 Although the response is limited, Committee may wish to consider amendment of the current policy and conditions to provide for disability awareness training for all drivers of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles on the next renewal of their licence and thereafter at 5 yearly intervals (5 years from issue of the first licence for new applicants). Disabled users are not confined to adapted vehicles – many disabilities are not visible or physical and a well-managed fleet should have drivers who are alert to the needs of all users.

3.3 The evidence received does not support the introduction at this stage of more side entry wheelchair accessible vehicles. This should be kept under review on an ongoing basis.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – N/A
- Technical, Environmental and Legal - N/A
- Political - N/A
- Reputation – N/A
- Equality & Diversity – amendment of the policy will demonstrate support for all residents and customers.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Approve amendment of the policy to provide that the conditions for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers shall be extended to include a condition that:

“A driver shall undergo disability awareness training provided by the Blue Lamp Trust on application for their licence, or on first renewal after 1 April 2024, and shall undergo refresher training at 5 year intervals”.

STEPHEN BARKER
SOLICITOR

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS
(If any)

For further information please ask for Stephen Barker, extension 3216.