

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 3 May 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Flavell (Chair); Councillor Sargeant (Deputy Chair); Councillors Haque, Ansell, Culbard, Beardsworth and T Eales

OFFICERS: Ruth Austen (Environmental Health & Licensing Manager)
Louise Faulkner (Licensing Team Leader)
Clive Tobin (Litigation & Licensing Solicitor)
Ed Bostock (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Duffy and Walker.

2. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Altab Ali addressed the Committee on behalf of Euro 5 hackney drivers and stated that many would fall into hardship should the policy be implemented. He (on behalf of Euro 5 hackney drivers) asked for a 5 year extension on the timeframes for phasing out Euro 5 hackney vehicles.

Abdul Basar advised that many drivers were anxious about the proposed policy and asked the Committee if consideration had been given to possible financial assistance that had been mentioned at the meeting held on 28th March 2018.

Simon Willsher commented that following the last meeting, details on infrastructure related to electric vehicles were still lacking. He voiced concern regarding the appeal procedure, stating that there were a lot of hoops to jump through for drivers to keep older vehicles.

Kevin Willsher stated that there were no surveys or statistics within the report about struggling drivers or emissions. Mr Willsher provided statistics about air quality in Northampton and the Environmental Health & Licensing Manager confirmed that the data related to average levels for the town and not to specific locations in the town centre.

Steve Ward stated that according to the HPI web checker, only 80% of vehicles listed returned results and that it would be difficult to know the Euro standards of the rest. He suggested that the Council emulate TFL and go by the manufacturing date, and assume that any vehicle produced after September 2009 was a Euro 5. In light of the evidence, Mr Ward advised that he was in favour of Option 3

Simon Shanks explained that he had recently purchased a Euro 5 diesel Mercedes in good faith, but the policy would require him to get rid of it in 4 years; he felt like he had been misled by the Council.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

5. TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE EMISSIONS POLICY

The Licensing Team Leader explained Members' options to them as set out in Appendix A of the report, with further amendments that could be made with regard to allowing petrol Euro 5 and Diesel Euro 6 vehicles. It was explained that charging points for electric vehicles would be installed within months in a number of the Council's multi-storey car parks; whilst it was not considered good practice to have them installed at taxi ranks, other options were being looked at. It was further explained that the Planning department had been involved in discussions and that charging points would be included in 2 new housing developments in the town, as well as community hubs and communal spaces. The Committee were informed that infrastructure would come from many different sources and not solely from local authorities.

An appeals process had been formed to address the concerns of hackney drivers which would be dealt with by Committee or officers on a case-by-case basis, however it was advised that it was not the remit of the Licensing Service to provide financial assistance to drivers

The Licensing Team Leader explained that the list of vehicles contained within the report could change from day to day but what was listed in Appendix D was a good guideline as to what vehicles were currently available.

In response to a question, the Committee heard that the Emissions Policy adopted by Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Councils required drivers to provide service and MOT documents 3 times a year as well as an 8-10 year age limit on vehicles; their standards were higher than those proposed for Northampton Borough Council.

In response to a question relating to infrastructure, the Committee were told that the Borough were behind some local authorities, however they were able to learn from the mistakes of other councils.

The Committee were informed that the cost of a vehicle retrofit LPG conversion was approximately £9,000. They also heard that the Policy, once agreed, could be reviewed by the Licensing Committee at any time.

At this juncture, Councillor Haque left the meeting.

The Committee retired to make a decision.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Emissions Policy be adopted in accordance with the Report with the addition that Euro 5+ petrol hybrid vehicles may be licensed as ultra-low emissions vehicles (ULEV).
2. That the Policy takes effect immediately however, if there is clear evidence that a vehicle was purchased in good faith prior to adoption of the policy the Council would still issue a licence provided that the vehicle met the Council's relevant licensing policies in all other respects.
3. That the Appeals process and associated delegations set out in the Table in the Report will be adopted but will apply only in relation to Hackney Carriage vehicles.

The reasons for adopting the policy are to give effect to the commitment already made by the Council in its Low Emissions Strategy.

The meeting concluded at 7:43 pm