

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILLICENSING COMMITTEE5 December 2023Report by Clerk to the Licensing CommitteeWHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE POLICY**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To seek Committee's approval to commence a consultation with the trade, public and relevant disability rights groups to provide information to inform potential changes to the Council's current wheelchair accessible vehicle policy.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Committee authorises the Clerk to:
 - (a) Commence consultation with relevant stakeholders to ingather information regarding the current availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles to the public and the demand for such vehicles;
 - (b) Undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment to inform any future changes to the policy; and
 - (c) Bring a further report to Committee in early 2024 with proposals as to any recommended changes to the policy.

BACKGROUND

3. In April 2021, as a result of the financial impacts of the Covid pandemic upon members of the taxi trade, East Renfrewshire Council Licensing Committee agreed to relax its previous policy whereby all applications for the grant of new taxi and private hire car licences required to be submitted in respect of vehicles which were wheelchair accessible (WAV's). From that juncture, only new taxi car applications required to meet this criteria. The Committee at that time also determined to review the position once experience of the new regime had been gained.

REPORT

4. At the time of the decision to relax restrictions in 2021 the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles operating under East Renfrewshire Licences numbered 41. As at today's date this number has dropped dramatically both as a result of lapsed licences and drivers replacing wheelchair accessible vehicles with vehicles which did not provide that facility at the time of licence renewal. Recent investigation suggests that there are only 5 such vehicles currently licensed.
5. At the introduction of the policy, it was agreed that the policy would be reviewed to determine its effectiveness and to decide what changes, if any, should be implemented. This review is now required to consider the impact of this reduction in wheelchair accessible vehicles and to identify mechanisms which will meet the

interests of both the disabled population and the trade. The review requires to be informed by the views of relevant stakeholders and on that basis authority is sought to commence a consultation with those groups over the next few months.

6. Any policy decision made by the Council which is likely to affect individuals with protected characteristics under the Equalities legislation should be screened and assessed for its impact prior to the policy being determined. An impact assessment will allow the findings of such assessment to inform the Committee's ultimate consideration of the policy.

RECOMMENDATION

7. That the Committee authorises the Clerk to:
 - (a) Commence consultation with relevant stakeholders to ingather information regarding the current availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles to the public and the demand for such vehicles;
 - (b) Undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment to inform any future changes to the policy; and
 - (c) Bring a further report to Committee in early 2024 with proposals as to any recommended changes to the policy.

Report Author: Gerry Mahon Clerk to the Committee and Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement

Tel: 0141 577 3801

e-mail Gerry.mahon@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk