

To: Stuart Brown, Chief Executive, Mendip District Council
From: Jack Godley – Senior Licensing & Business Support Officer
Subject: Amendment to the Taxi and Private Hire Policy
Date: 1st April 2020

Summary

Approval is sought to effect a change to the Taxi Licensing Policy to enable Taxi Vehicle Suitability Inspections and Licensed Driver medicals to be extended for the duration of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which has of course been declared a major incident.

This decision rests with the Licensing Board, but in the current circumstances where the Council is unable to convene this meeting, it is requested that the CEO approves this request exercising his powers under **Section 19, Part B, Paragraph 1.7** of the Constitution, following consultation with the Leader.

Current Position

The Taxi and Private Hire Policy states the following in relation to **vehicles inspections**.

3.8.5: *“The Authority will only accept the VSI (Vehicle Suitability Inspection) Certificate where the vehicle has passed the inspection and is within 1 month of expiry.”*

Further detail is provided in **Annex 8** in respect of vehicles inspections, this is in addition to the MOT certificate.

Annex 8 states that *“the Authority requires vehicle inspections to be carried out at certain times. Inspections will be required on initial application, renewal, at 6 monthly intervals for licensed vehicles after 1 year from date of registration and at other times.”*

The Taxi & Private hire Policy states the following in relation to **drivers’ medicals**.

2.11.1: *“Best practice as stated in the Guidance is for the higher standard Group 2 medical check to be utilised for licensing those persons driving taxis. This standard is detailed in the booklet “Medical Aspects of Fitness to Drive” published by Medical Commission for The Prevention of Accidents.”*

Further detail is provided in **2.11.6** in respect of drivers’ medicals.

2.11.6: *The regularity of these medical checks is as follows:*

- *A medical certificate is required of all applicants for the grant of a new driver’s licence,*
- *With immediate effect, when the applicant reaches the age of 45 years, With immediate effect, then every 5 years (on the relevant birthday), thereafter until they reach 70 years of age.*

- *With immediate effect, once the licence holder has reached the age of 70 years he/she must produce a medical certificate and on every birthday following thereafter.*

Background

The country is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and as such emergency legislation ([Coronavirus Act 2020](#)) has been enacted to deal with all manner of normal day to day activities to enable the Country to continue functioning whilst it remains in “lockdown” status.

The Department of Transport (DoT) have announced that cars, motorcycles and vans will be granted a 6 month exemption from MOT testing, which will enable vital services such as deliveries to continue, frontline workers to get to work, and people to get essential food and medicine. The proviso is that vehicles must be kept in roadworthy condition. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vehicle-owners-to-be-grantedmot-exemption-in-battle-against-coronavirus>

It is anticipated that medical services will be stretched to capacity in the coming months and therefore non-emergency services like driver medicals will have to be suspended until such time normal service can be resumed.

Recommendation

In this current climate very few drivers are working so therefore not earning, which in itself is resulting in financial hardship. The Licensing Team are ensuring that our Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers are being constantly updated via text in respect of the various changes in legislation and also being signposted to the latest information in respect to small business grants and help for the self-employed.

To support the above, it is recommended that the following temporary changes to the Taxi & Private Hire Policy are to assist the trade in these troubled times;

1 Vehicle Suitability Inspections

MDC are suspending the requirements for a Mendip Vehicle Suitability Inspection for Hackney Carriages & Private Hire Vehicles in line with the current Department of Transport decision for MOT testing.

From 1st April 2020 any Mendip Vehicle Suitable Inspection expiring beyond that date will now be extended for 6 months. This suspension shall remain in place until such time as Mendip District Council reverses its decision.

Drivers are advised that they must make sure their vehicle is safe to drive ('roadworthy') and be mindful that the vehicle can be unsafe even if your MOT expiry date has been extended.

2 Driver medicals

MDC are suspending the requirements for a Driver medical due to the pressure put on medical services during this pandemic.

From 1st April 2020 any medical requirements to renew a licenced driver's dual licence will now be extended for 6 months. This suspension shall remain in place until such time as Mendip District Council reverses its decision.

Drivers are advised that they must not drive if they suspect or have been advised that they are unfit to do so. See health conditions that effect your ability to drive - <https://www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving>

An extension of the time periods for either of these proposals requires a temporary amendment to the Taxi & Private Policy as they both relate to policy rather than legislative requirements.

If adopted it is suggest that these temporary changes are published by updating the licensing page on the MDC website and texting/emailing all drivers.

Decision: Approved

Signed: Stuart Brown

Dated: 03/04/2020

Attachments:

[Taxi and Private Hire Policy](#)