

COUNCIL - 11TH OCTOBER 2012

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

**Minute/
Page No.**

REGULATORY COMMITTEE : 25TH JULY 2012

19/97

MECHANICAL INSPECTION AND LICENSING: HACKNEY AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Committee considered a report recommending that the Earlswood depot should be appointed as the authorised site for both the mechanical and the licensing inspections of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

At present, the mechanical testing and licensing inspection of vehicles are undertaken separately and in different places. Drivers make their own arrangements for MoT testing before attending the Town Hall, with their papers, for a vehicle inspection by licensing officers before being granted a licence.

Combining the two tasks will mean that drivers only have to make the one appointment, meaning both a time and potential cost-saving for them. It would also streamline processes for officers enabling them to work more efficiently and effectively. A vacant position within the licensing team, currently filled by a contractor, would thereby be deleted in due course.

The Earlswood Depot has the capacity to undertake both tasks. Some structural work will be required to provide an additional MoT testing bay, and to adjust the office and workshop accommodation, but the costs for this would be financed by the Earlswood capital programme with an expected return on investment within a year.

Officers were also proposing that the requirement for vehicles to be less than four years old at first licensing should be removed, bringing them into line with the general age restrictions - seven years for an ordinary vehicle and nine years for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.

This was being recommended because all vehicles would undergo the same level of testing at the Earlswood Depot meaning a consistent control on the condition of vehicles regardless of age. Removing the four-year age barrier would allow drivers more flexibility when purchasing a vehicle, and may also encourage more drivers to buy wheelchair accessible vehicles of a slightly older age if it proved to be cost-effective.

The Committee noted that the new arrangements would be phased in gradually, to allow for the necessary works to be undertaken. Details of the charging mechanism and logistical arrangements were also yet to be finalised, but it was anticipated that with two MoT lanes in place there should be no capacity issues.

RESOLVED:

(i) to designate the Council's Earlswood depot as the location for the mechanical inspection and licensing of vehicles, to take effect from 17th September 2012 or the earliest date thereafter when the necessary changes have been implemented;

(ii) to remove the requirement for vehicles to be under four years old when presented for licensing for the first time as a taxi or private hire vehicle to bring it into line with the maximum age limit for the relevant vehicle.

(iii) to authorise the Head of Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Chairman of the Regulatory Committee, to amend the Policy and Conditions booklets for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to take account of the above recommendations; and

RECOMMENDED to delete Delegation 4.30, relating to certain vehicles under five years old being licensed by the Head of Service, from the Council's Constitution.