

REPORT OF THE DIVISIONAL OFFICER
LICENSING, FOOD & SAFETY
TO THE SPECIAL GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
20th JUNE 2014

TOWN POLICE CLAUSES ACT 1847
APPLICATION TO SUBSTITUTE A HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE
MERCEDES C220, REGISTRATION MARK LN10 YYR
MR SHAFIQUE MEAH

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 An application to substitute an existing hackney carriage licence has been received from Mr Meah. The vehicle is a black Mercedes Benz, Registration Mark LN10 YYR and is capable of carrying 4 passengers.

2. **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The existing licensed vehicle, plate number HC 4023, Registration Mark FL58 ULW is a black Chevrolet Epica and is licensed to carry 4 passengers. This vehicle is now 5 years and 7 months old and the mileage recorded on its last inspection on the 2nd October 2013 was 175,416. The licence for this vehicle expires on 30th September 2014.
- 2.2 The vehicle Mr Meah wishes to substitute onto this licence is 4 years and 1 month old. The vehicle passed the Council's inspection on the 6th June 2014 and the mileage recorded at this time was 112,704 miles.
- 2.3 Mr Meah has confirmed that his existing vehicle is off the road due to accident damage and that the vehicle has been written off by his insurance company.
- 2.4 Members are therefore asked to determine the suitability of the black Mercedes Benz C220, Registration Mark LN10 YYR for licensing as a hackney carriage vehicle in Swansea.
- 2.5 In order to assist Members in reaching their decision the vehicle will be available for inspection at the Civic Centre on Friday 20th June 2014.

3. **THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING: BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE: MARCH 2010**

- 3.1 The Department for Transport published its Best Practice Guidance in March 2010. This states:

It is perfectly possible for an older vehicle to be in good condition. So the setting of an age limit beyond which a local authority will not licence vehicles may be arbitrary and inappropriate. But a greater frequency of testing may be appropriate for older vehicles – for

example, twice-yearly tests for vehicles more than five years old.

4. CURRENT HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE POLICY

- 4.1 The Council's current policy in relation to hackney carriage vehicles requires that vehicles will not be accepted for licensing on the first occasion unless brand new. All vehicles will be re-licensed on merit.
- 4.2 The policy was adopted by Swansea City Council in March 1985 and by the City and County of Swansea in 1996.
- 4.3 The reasons for the adoption of the policy were:
- i. So that the local authority could be confident as to the accident history of the relevant vehicles;
 - ii. it was envisaged that if the vehicle were a new vehicle its proprietor would be more committed to maintaining higher standards of the vehicle as a result of the higher investment made.
 - iii. The policy was intended to ensure that the vehicle was not already 'tired' before it was licensed, so it was more likely to be able to withstand the rigors demanded of a hackney carriage;
- 4.4 Since the adoption of the policy the mechanical standards, interior of the vehicles and their external appearance have improved. The improvements have been of general benefit to the public and also the image of the hackney carriage trade in Swansea.
- 4.5 The Council's age policy has been challenged since it's implementation by way of Judicial Review in 1995.
- 4.6 The decision of the High Court at this time was to dismiss the application on the basis that the evidence provided showed that the policy had the full support of the hackney carriage trade in Swansea and that the policy was carefully considered, and had reasonable objectives to protect the safety of hackney carriages and the comfort and convenience of those who travel in them.

5. PREVIOUS PROPOSAL TO ALLOW THE LICENSING OF SECOND HAND HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLES

- 5.1 In December 2008 the Licensing Committee considered a request from a hackney carriage proprietor to allow licence holders to purchase second hand vehicles to replace vehicles that have been damaged and can no longer be used as a licensed vehicle as a result.

5.2 The decision of the Licensing Committee was that any individual requests would be considered on merit should they arise.

5.3 Since that decision a number of requests have been considered by Committee.

6. **RECOMMENDATION**

6.1 It is recommended that after careful consideration of the detail of this report and hearing from Mr Meah, Members determine whether to:

- a) grant the application made by Mr Meah to substitute the Mercedes Benz C220, Registration Mark LN10 YYR onto the hackney carriage vehicle licence HC 4023; or
- b) refuse the application made by Mr Meah to substitute the Mercedes Benz C220, Registration Mark LN10 YYR onto the hackney carriage vehicle licence HC 4023 giving full reasons for this decision.

The General Licensing Committee's instructions are requested.

Background Papers:	Licence Application
Contact Officer:	Richard Jenkins
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Legal Contact:	Lyndsay Thomas
