

LICENSING COMMITTEE INFORMATION SHEET

21 FEBRUARY 2024

TYPE OF APPLICATION: Application for an exemption from the *Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Policy*

APPLICANT: Steven Wilson (T788)

INFORMATION NOTE

Originally deferred from 03/05/2023 committee

Mr Wilson is seeking an exemption to the Committee Policy that states that any new grant application for a taxi must be for a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) and that only a WAV can ever be licensed on such a licence.

The Committee has before it an email from Mr Wilson indicating the grounds under which he is seeking the exemption, namely financial considerations and vehicle availability. Members may note that currently there is a 1-2 month wait for a new WAV, which costs only slightly more than a new saloon.

Mr Wilson is currently a licence holder of a Taxi Vehicle Operator Licence (T788).

The request was deferred from the Committee meeting on 3 May 2023 to await further information and/or advice from the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning, in relation to ongoing discussions around Low Emission Zone enforcement and exemption pertaining to taxi and private hire vehicles which may fall below the emission standards.

Should the Committee be minded granting the exemption Mr Wilson is aware that he will be required to submit a substitution application for Taxi Licence T788.

COMMITTEE GUIDELINES/POLICY

Licensing Committee policy states that any new grant application for a Taxi Licence must be for a WAV vehicle.

REQUEST

After some consideration I would like to ask to be considered for exemption from the WAV policy.

As I have been a taxi driver now for many years and have followed the WAV policy, and currently own a VW Sharan 2008 model unfortunately my circumstances have changed in the last few years, this is down to Covid causing financial stress and lack of business in the taxi trade during these times now I appreciate these times are now behind us (hopefully) but now the current financial crisis with cost of living, interest rates, etc is having a major impact on us individual drivers. As I have mentioned previously I currently have been a taxi driver for some years with only ever having a WAV and only ever doing three hires from the ranks and two of them not supposed to be my hires but other drivers refused to take them for some reason. My vehicle now has become of an age that will not meet the LEZ next year when it comes into force. Now I appreciate this vehicle can still operate as a taxi but if it breaches the LEZ area a penalty charge will be occurred and as far as I can see from the Aberdeen City-council website the cost will be £60, now with this cost in mind this wouldn't be possible to operate as a driver due to cost versus available work as if I don't operate in the city centre then working outwith the LEZ wouldn't be financially viable.

This only leaving myself with one option in purchasing a new / second hand WAV now these range from approximately £18000 upwards and with suppliers aware of this and interest rates rising these are only going to get more expensive and unfortunately I can't afford to purchase a vehicle at this price as the current living costs etc is having a major impact on my myself and family putting me into financial hardship.

Now to purchase a new / second hand car this is a lot cheaper ranging from £12000 upwards and after working out monthly costs etc this option would be affordable and be complying with the LEZ policy.

Also to take into consideration what will happen with electric vehicles coming in the future of the industry.

Also since becoming a taxi driver I have been told all vehicles will be a WAV by a certain date but this keeps getting changed and pushed back further, while all the time I've been compliant to the rules.

I also considered trying to put my plate in to retention while I try and source the funds to purchase a WAV but I'm understanding that this is possible but only for 28 days even tho the yearly fee was paid in full.

I understand there are many drivers in this position but I have now exerted all avenues and I would be grateful if I could be considered to be exempt from the WAV policy so I may be in a position to purchase a vehicle to continue to operate a friendly and successful service to the public and keep myself from financial hardship.

Otherwise I may be forced to leave the industry and seek other options once the LEZ comes into force.

I would once again like to thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and look forward in hearing back from you