

## Members' Library Service Request Form

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Originator	Ian Forrest
Originator's Ref (if any)	
Document Title	Testing of Taxis and Private Hire Cars - COVID-19 Emergency Recess Report

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Additional information:

This report was processed in accordance with COVID-19 Emergency Recess Procedures, and was approved by Councillors Currie, Hampshire, Henderson and McMillan

Authorised By	Lel Gillingwater/Jill Totney
Designation	Team Mgr - Democratic & Licensing
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**REPORT TO:** Members Library Service [COVID-19 Emergency Recess Arrangements]

**MEETING DATE:**

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

**SUBJECT:** Testing of Taxis and Private Hire Cars

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To allow for a temporary relaxation on the testing procedures for taxi and private hire cars in light of the pressure being experienced by the Council's Vehicle Plant Maintenance Unit (VPMU) in Macmerry as a result of the present COVID-19 crisis.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the requirement for all taxis and private hire cars to be tested by the VPMU in Macmerry be suspended for an initial period of twelve weeks, from the date of approval of this report, with the position to be subject to review thereafter.
- 2.2 That no new applications to licence a vehicle as a taxi or private hire car in East Lothian be accepted for an initial period of twelve weeks from the date of approval of this report, with the position to be subject to review thereafter.
- 2.3 That vehicles, for which a renewal of licence application has been submitted timeously, be allowed to continue to operate on the basis of the current licence until such time as testing can be arranged and the renewal application can be processed.
- 2.4 That the policy of the East Lothian Licensing Sub-committee with regard to the testing of taxis and private hire cars be amended in line with the foregoing recommendations and subject to the same proposed timeframes.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The current policy of the Council is that any vehicle which it is proposed shall be licensed as a taxi or private hire car in East Lothian requires to pass an inspection before the licence can be granted; the inspection is carried out by the Council VPMU facility based in Macmerry. In addition, the vehicle must also have passed a standard MOT within the period of 30 days prior to the examination at VPMU.
- 3.2 The latest advice on standard MOT processing is that these will be suspended as from 30 March 2020 and current MOT certificates shall automatically be extended by a period of six months.
- 3.3 VPMU carry out a taxi test in line with the criteria agreed by East Lothian Council. This test covers the same aspects as an MOT with additional requirements of the vehicle to meet the standards prescribed within the licensing conditions. VPMU also fit the taxi plates to the vehicles on successful registration/testing. Currently the facility to test these vehicles is being restricted due to the impact of COVID-19 on staffing levels. Third party options are not available as East Lothian Councils VPMU is the only authorised taxi testing centre.

### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The recommendations will introduce a temporary amendment of the policy for vehicle testing, which is considered to be necessary in light of the present COVID-19 emergency.

### **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy

### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – Fee income from taxi tests will not be received during the period of suspension but income shall resume as normal when testing is reinstated. An assessment of lost income will be included within the recorded cost of the Council's response to COVID-19 in anticipation the Council can mitigate such losses through national government assistance.
- 6.2 Personnel - the proposed measures are designed to keep staff employed within the VPMU safe during the present COVID-19 pandemic and are in line with current national and regional Government advice.
- 6.3 Other - The suspension will be likely to result in an increase in business once normal service is resumed in order to deal with the backlog of tests which arises as a result of the suspension.

## 7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

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