

APPENDIX 2 - TAXI POLICY REVIEW – WORKING GROUP

Session 2 - Vehicle Policy

Date / Time of meeting: 8th Dec 2016 @ 14:00

Venue: Members Meeting Room, CDC Offices

In Attendance:

- Cllr John Connor
- Cllr Len Macey
- Cllr Henry Potter
- Giusj Di Lauro (Legal Team)
- Laurence Foord (Licensing Manager)
- Alex Barson (Licensing Team)

Apologies:

- Cllr John Elliott

Overview:

AB gave quick recap of last meeting:

- Frequency of medicals - Advised of following the DVLA guidance for medicals, but to still require an annual medical after 60 rather than 65.
- Need to look at minimum age issue with legal.
- General discussion around PH Knowledge Test.

Age of Vehicles

AB advised of Council's current policy. Numbers of vehicles over 15 years old – none for Private Hire, approx. ¼ of the fleet for Hackney's ranging from 15 – 20 years. The condition of the older vehicles vary. Some in ok condition, some have poor bodywork. Discussed implications for private hire and hackney trade. Discussed the issues with having a blanket policy when it comes to renewals.

Member's view

Members in support of an age limit being introduced. The 5 and 15 years seem suitable timescales based on comparisons with other Council's policies and also the percentage of the fleet that is over 15 years old. Consensus that this should apply to both Private Hire and Hackney Carriage. Important to provide a suitable period of time for proprietors to comply with this requirement, phase in over 2 years possibly. Members keen for there to be an exemption in place for vehicles over 15 years old when they are in pristine condition and full service history available.

Classic/Niche vehicles

Members keen for there to be recognition of these type of vehicles in the policy. Wording can be looked at from other documents. Each application would need to be considered on a case by case basis.

CCTV

Agreed that CCTV is an extremely useful tool to help with protecting drivers and passengers and assisting with complaints and allegations. Current policy advises drivers to consider installing CCTV in vehicle but not a mandatory requirement. Difficulties around specification of devices and data protection implications. If make mandatory then need to specify what types of equipment are acceptable, monitor and test. Also systems would need to be encrypted to comply with DPA. Access to CCTV suppliers limited in the area. Brighton and Portsmouth appear to be the nearest.

Member's view

For CCTV to remain as an advisory in the policy. To reconsider at the next policy review. As part of the consultation with the trade see whether there is any particular response one way or the other.

Tilt/Displacing of seats

Features in policy, but unclear of intention. Are tilt/displacement seats permitted? Opposing stances on this issue. Some Authorities do not have a stipulation regarding access from rear seats and some Authorities do.

Member's view

General view was that it is important from a public safety perspective for Members of the public to be able to have a clear means of escape in an emergency. Noted that vehicles are manufactured to carry certain number of passengers, but designed for families and children normally in the back who are able to get out with greater ease in an emergency. For a private hire vehicle carrying around fee paying customers this configuration of seating without a clear route out is unsuitable.

Discussion around the sliding doors coming back far enough to allow direct access in and out from the rear seats. Depends on width of gap and there may be a benefit in stipulating a minimum distance.

Further Action – Liaise with Legal to get interpretation of sentence in policy. Feed back to group.

Exemption plates

Discussions around what is exempt work – chauffeur/executive. Difficulties created due to drivers undertaking both mainstream and exempt type work. Number of exempt plates issued and being used as a substitute for the main plate when conducting exempt work, but still have door signs on. Either have the exempt sticker if undertaking exempt work and then when conducting mainstream display plate and door signs.

Member's view

Felt this may be an operational matter.

Further Action – To discuss with legal regarding definition of exempt work. Also need to look at process for administering.

Advertising on PH Vehicles

Current policy restrictive in terms of advertising on PH Vehicles.

Member's View

To relax requirements to enable vehicles to display operators business on side of vehicle – Suggested this should be the 2 rear doors and some stipulation regarding size. Not keen on advertising elsewhere on the vehicle. Discussion around allowing other businesses not associated with the PH Operator to advertise on vehicle, although this would be subject to Council approval. General consensus to start with a gentle relaxation and permit only the operators to advertise on the vehicle.

Further Action - AB to draft suitable wording.

Write Offs – Cat C and Cat D Vehicles

Nothing in policy at the moment. Discussion around Cat C/D. Vehicles written off as have been in accident and uneconomical to repair. Occasionally driver buys vehicle back off insurance company, repairs, passes MOT and Fitness and is licensed by us. MOT/Fitness is checking that the vehicle is mechanically sound and how it presents to the public. Will not pick up on any structural defects necessarily. Difficulties around determining the level of damage sustained. Some Authorities although not many have a blanket ban on Cat C/Cat D vehicles. Some request HPI checks.

Member's View

Need further clarification on Cat C/D and HPI checks. Concerned that vehicle may be structurally unsafe but potentially could still be licensed.

Wheelchair Users

General discussion around the challenges taxi drivers are facing in terms of carrying wheelchair users. Many different types of wheelchair now available. Electrical wheelchairs in particular can be heavy and difficult to manoeuvre in confined spaces. Advice given to drivers regarding dynamic risk assessment and shouldn't be transporting if unsafe to do so. Main way of tackling this is through training. Discussion around DSA withdrawing Wheelchair Assessment but looking to use trainer from WSCC for this, which appears superior to the 20 minute assessment the DSA use to do.

Meeting finished at approx. 15.50