

Licensing Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 1st November, 2012.

Present:- Councillors Davis (Chair), Bains, Brooker, Malik (from 6.33pm), Mittal (Vice-Chair), Munawar, Plimmer, Rasib and Sohal.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Wright.

PART 1

18. Declaration of Interest

Agenda Item 3 - Councillor Munawar declared that a local resident, whom he regarded as an uncle, had contacted him in relation to this agenda item. Councillor Munawar left the meeting when the Committee voted on this agenda item.

19. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 4th October 2012

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2012 be approved as a correct record.

20. Policy for Tinted Windows/Privacy Glass on Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles

The Senior Licensing Officer, Mrs Rumney, reminded Members that the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (as amended) specified the minimum levels of light that must pass through the windscreen and front side windows for motor vehicles first used on or after 1 April 1985. Light transmitted through the windscreen must be at least 75% and the front side windows at least 70%.

It was brought to Members attention that there were currently no regulations relating to rear passenger windows or windscreens and that there were a number of vehicle manufacturers that offered the option of very dark windows for rear passenger seats/windscreen. It was noted that Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicles provided a valuable public transport service and that it was essential that there was clear visibility into the rear of a licensed vehicle for a number of reasons, including:

- Excessively tinted glass restricted the driver's vision, especially in dark conditions. This may prevent drivers from seeing other road users or pedestrians.
- Activities taking place in the vehicle cannot be viewed from the outside posing both a risk to both passengers and driver.
- Enforcement officers need to see that the maximum number of passengers is not being exceeded

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- Vulnerable passengers such as lone females and young persons will feel safer in a vehicle where they can be seen
- To ensure public safety and wellbeing of the passengers and drivers.

Mrs Rumney stated that a consultation exercise regarding the proposals was conducted during July 2012 to September 2012 with all Private Hire Operators, representatives of the Private Hire Drivers, hackney carriage proprietors, VOSA and Thames Valley Police. A summary of the responses received were contained within the agenda report.

The policy options available to Committee Members were outlined for their consideration. Setting an approved level of tint on the rear passenger windows of licensed vehicles would ensure clarity as to the type of vehicles that could be purchased whilst also maintaining high safety standards.

A number points were raised in the ensuing discussion, including whether statistics were available regarding the number of accidents/incidents that had taken place with vehicles that had excessive tinting. Officers stated that although this information was not available, a number of incidents had been reported against drivers and that the introduction of a policy would ensure the safety of both the drivers and members of the public.

Responding to whether neighbouring local authorities had implemented a similar scheme, Members were informed that Reading Borough Council had a similar policy and that The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and South Bucks District Council were currently running a consultation process.

(Councillor Munawar left the meeting prior to the vote being taken)

Resolved: That for all Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicles:

- a) Light transmitted through the windscreen must be at least 75%
- b) All other windows (both front & rear) must allow at least 70% of light to be transmitted
- c) Exceptions to limiting the tint on the rear windows can be made providing the following criteria can be met:
 - the vehicle is used predominantly for contract hire/corporate work where no cash is exchanged
 - the vehicle is a stretched limousine or prestige/executive type (eg Mercedes, BMW, Audi etc)
- d) Where currently licensed vehicles have factory tinted/privacy glass fitted, they will remain licensed until the vehicle reaches the maximum licensable age of the vehicle in accordance with both private hire and hackney carriage vehicle age policies.
- e) Where currently licensed vehicles have had a 'tinted film' fitted after being licensed, that the film be removed.

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21. Members' Attendance Record

Noted.

22. Date of Next Meeting - 17 January 2013

Noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 6.53 pm)