

LICENSING APPLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE 3 MINUTES - 9 JANUARY 2018

Present: Councillor Livingston (Vice-Chair in the Chair);
Councillors Dennis and Skeats.

Apologies: Councillors Woodward (Chair), D Edwards and McDonald.

21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 1 November and 5 December 2017 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

22. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE MERCEDES VITO EURO 4 TAXI SPECIFICATION

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Sub-Committee to consider changes to the existing Hackney Carriage Mercedes Vito Euro 4 Taxi. On the 1 October 2008 the Sub-Committee (Minute 17 refers) had approved the use of the Mercedes Vito taxi; this new vehicle met the conditions of fitness set out by the Public Carriage office.

The report stated that there were 8 Mercedes Vito Euro 4 taxis on the fleet in Reading. Over the past four years an issue had developed with the rear wheel steering (RWS). It appeared that the construction of the RWS was not fit for purpose, kept breaking down and was difficult and expensive to repair. Mr Raja, the owner of a number of Vito's had requested that the Council adopt the approach taken by Manchester City Council, which had approved the removal of the RWS and the fixing of wheels to full-wheel alignment. A copy of the Manchester City Council report on the matter and Mr Raja's request were attached to the report at Appendix II.

The report stated that the Mercedes Vito Euro 5 taxi had a RWS system but the RWS issues had been resolved.

Officers commented that the issue of problem RWS had been around for a number of years and it was possible that the first owners of the Vito would not have known of the RWS issue however subsequent Vito owners may have known about the problem. The manufacturer was now aware of the problem and was in the process of resolving the issue. If the Council permitted vehicles to the fleet which were not to the London standard of fitness the Council may come under pressure to licence other vehicles that were below the required standard. Also, existing Hackney Carriage Vehicle owners may buy cheaper Euro 4 models in the knowledge that the Council would allow them to be decommissioned should that be agreed.

The Reading Taxi Association had indicated that it was not in favour of altering the existing conditions; a copy of their response was attached to the report at Appendix III. Correspondence between officers and Mercedes Benz Vans Ltd was attached to the report at Appendix IV and V.

13 hackney carriage vehicle drivers were present at the meeting, a number of whom addressed the Sub-Committee both for and against making changes to the existing criteria.

Resolved -

That no changes be made to the existing vehicle specification.

23. REVISION OF PRIVATE HIRE AND PRIVATE HIRE (SCHOOL TRANSPORT) DRIVER AND VEHICLE CONDITIONS AND VEHICLE SPECIFICATIONS

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Sub-Committee to consider changes to the specification and conditions relating to private hire vehicles and school transport vehicles. The specifications and conditions had been reviewed by officers and some sections which related to seating required removal or replacement to bring them up to date. The suggested amendments also removed unnecessary and old conditions and corrected some wording.

The report stated that the current conditions and specifications relating to private hire vehicles and school transport vehicles had last been amended in 2013 to permit alternative fuel vehicles to be licensed, minimum engine sizes to be removed, to align the vehicles allowed with European standard classifications and changes to window tint specifications to bring them in line with modern manufacturing. The private hire trade had been consulted regarding the proposed changes to the specifications and conditions and no objections had been received; one response was received from an operator who stated they were happy with the changes.

Resolved -

That the following changes to the specifications and conditions be made:

School Transport Vehicle Specification 2

Current wording

- 2) No vehicle shall be licensed unless it can carry a minimum of 4 passengers.

New wording

- 2) The vehicle must be capable of carrying no more than 8 passengers.

Private Hire Vehicle Specification 11 and School Transport Vehicle Specification 6

Current wording

- 11) New vehicles will only be licensed which fall within the following Euro NCAP or European Classification groups as set below:

- Large Family
- Executive
- Small MPV (4 passengers only)
- Large MPV
- European Commission Classification D,E,F & M
- Small MPV's will only be licensed to carry 4 passengers

New wording

- 11) New vehicles will only be licensed which fall within the following Euro NCAP or European Classification groups as set below:

- Large Family
- Executive

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- Small MPV (will only be licensed to carry a maximum of 4 passengers)
- Large MPV
- European Commission Classification D,E,F & M

School Transport Vehicle Condition 15

Current wording

15) The vehicle must comply with the following minimum requirements:

(i) rear height (seat to roof measured from point of contact between seat cushion and back of seat) 30" (76cm)

NB If a seat has been replaced by a space for a wheelchair, see Condition 6.10.vii for minimum rear height requirements

(ii) depth of seat 17.5" (45cm)

(iii) knee space (back of front seat to squab) 21.5" (55cm)

(v) at least three passenger doors in addition to the driver's door.

(vi) the vehicle must be suitable for the school transport route covered

New wording

15) The vehicle must be suitable for the school transport route covered.

School Transport Vehicle Condition 18

Current wording

18) No vehicle shall be licensed unless it can carry a minimum of four passengers (excluding the driver) and shall provide a minimum clear seat width for each passenger of 16 inches.

New wording

18) The proprietor of any vehicle that is licensed must inform the council prior to any changes they propose to the interior layout of seating.

24. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items of business as it was likely that there would be disclosures of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

25. APPLICATIONS FOR THE GRANT, RENEWAL, SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE DRIVER LICENCES

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Sub-Committee to consider the suspension or revocation of a private hire vehicle driver's licence.

A summary of the circumstances of the case was appended to the report.

AA was not present at the meeting and the application was considered in his absence.

Resolved -

- (1) That the three year private hire vehicle driver's licence in respect of AA remain in force but that his licence be suspended for 21 days, with effect from 21 days' notice being given of the Sub-Committee's decision, by reason of:
 - (a) the nature of his offences, as detailed in the report;
 - (b) his breaches of licence conditions, as detailed in the report;
 - (c) any other reasons identified: the written representations that set out how he had behaved in a dishonest manner.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 1, 2, 3 and 5)

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.00pm)