

Minor amendment to Private Hire Vehicle Licence Conditions relating to Seating

Report of Councillor Doug Pullen, Cabinet Member for Housing and Health

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Contact Officer: Jack Twomey / Gareth Davies

Tel Number: 01543 308734 / 01543 308741

Email: jack.twomey@lichfielddc.gov.uk

gareth.davies@lichfielddc.gov.uk

Key Decision? **YES NO (delete as appropriate)**

Local Ward
Members



REGULATORY AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 As vehicle safety technology moves on, our licence conditions must keep pace with the changes.
- 1.2 Seats which must be tilted to permit access to other rows of seats are currently not permitted under the vehicle conditions for Private Hire Vehicles.
- 1.3 This report is proposing that the condition preventing the use of such seating arrangements is amended so that they can be used.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members approve a change to the Private Hire vehicle Condition 10.2 to permit the use of tilting seats to gain access to another row of seats to read:

10.2 The seating arrangement in "People Carrier" type vehicles will be fixed and approved by the Council. The seating will not be moved once approval has been granted. Customers hiring any vehicle in which any seat must be tilted, moved or in any way adjusted to gain access to another row of seats shall be advised of this at the time of booking.

3. Background

- 3.1 The current Private Hire Vehicle Licence Conditions are shown in Appendix A.
- 3.2 Condition 10.2 prohibits the use of vehicles where any seat needs to be tilted, moved or in any way adjusted to gain access to another row of seats.
- 3.3 As new vehicles are coming onto the market, it is becoming clear that "people carrier" type vehicles with up to 8 passenger seats are no longer available new without at least one seat which has to be tilted to gain access to another row of seats. It is understood that this is because the sliding rear doors are narrower on modern people carriers so that the pillars which are on either side of the door are closer together, thus improving side impact protection where previously a vehicle may have hit a wider sliding door without striking the stronger pillars and thus cause more damage and potentially injury.
- 3.4 Under normal circumstances a driver wishing to purchase a new vehicle would have the option to choose an alternative where the model they are considering has folding seats. It seems that no new

vehicles with 8 passenger seats are available without folding seats to gain access and thus to maintain the requirement for vehicles having direct access to all rows of seats is in effect preventing the use of 8 seat private hire vehicles in the future.

- 3.5 Furthermore, as vehicles become safer, it is appropriate that the Council should encourage operators to consider the most safe and technologically advanced vehicles for passengers in the district.
- 3.6 This is a minor amendment to conditions which benefits and was requested by the trade and it is not therefore considered necessary to consult them prior to implementation. It is proposed that a further, more in depth review of all taxi and private hire vehicle and driver conditions and policies takes place during 2018, once the restructure of Regulatory Services, Housing and Wellbeing is complete and the new Licensing Team is in place. That review will include consultation with the trade.

Alternative Options	To keep with the current condition which prevents the use of tilting seats in private hire vehicles only. This is not considered appropriate for the reasons outlined. Two drivers are currently awaiting the outcome of this report as they are waiting to purchase new vehicles which they will use for many years to come.
Consultation	Some consultation has taken place with other local authorities to determine how many continue to have a condition relating to folding seats. Most do not.
Financial Implications	None.
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	May be considered to assist with the vibrant and prosperous economy aspect of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 as it will assist drivers who are trying to make a living from private hire. It also will ensure that residents can use the most up to date and therefore safest private hire vehicles in future.
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	Potentially negative impact in relation to customers who are less able to access seating, however it should be noted that all vehicles will have <i>some</i> seats which are directly accessible and more able bodied customers on the same journey may select any seats which are less easy to access. Furthermore, the suggestion that the condition requires the operator to inform the customer of this arrangement at the time of booking should enable any customer to make alternative arrangements should they so wish.
Crime & Safety Issues	None.

	Risk Description	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	None	
B		
C		
D		
E		