

### **Proposed Changes to the Current Policy and Vehicle specification for Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles**

Report of the Licensing Officer

**Key Decision: No**

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#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report is to bring to the attention of the Licensing Committee the need to make changes to the current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy to agree new vehicle Specifications that will better reflect current Vehicle Development with regards to passenger safety and passenger comfort, and changes to permit the use of Electric and Hybrid Powered vehicles to help with environmental considerations.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

2.1 That: the committee meets to consider the content of this report by Licensing Officer Gerry Thorne and the Draft Vehicle Specification, and if in agreement with the changes, authorise the updating of the Councils Policy and associated Vehicle Specification as per his recommendation.

#### **3.0 Summary**

3.1 Havant Borough Council has a Policy relating to the type and specification of Vehicles that are considered safe and suitable for the purpose of carrying passengers for Hire and Reward. Vehicle with up to 8 seats can be licensed for this purpose. The current vehicle specification has not been updated for several years, during which time Vehicle development has advanced considerably, not least in regards to the development of Electric and Hybrid powered vehicles and also significant changes relating to passenger safety. It is felt by the Licensing Officers that the current policy does not make any provision for electric vehicles and many Hybrid vehicles would fail to meet to the current requirement for a Vehicle to have a minimum engine capacity of 1.4L.

3.2 The growth in Smaller MPV's with ostensibly 6 seats has led to a growing demand to Licence such vehicles. It is felt that such vehicles offer very limited passenger space and even less luggage carrying capacity. Often the rearmost passengers are effectively 'trapped' behind the centre row of seats and in the

event of an accident might struggle to get out of the vehicle. Often the rearmost seats are temporary in nature and are only accessible to small or fitter persons and as such are not suitable for the elderly, disabled and larger people.

#### **4.0 Subject of Report**

4.1 Vehicle Specification currently allows only vehicles (Petrol or Diesel ) with an engine capacity of 1.4L or more. Licensing Officers feel that this should be amended as follows:

The engine capacity must be a minimum of 1400cc (not applicable to electric hybrid vehicles)

- (e) In the case of a battery powered engine there must be adequate charging capacity in the batteries to sustain the use of the vehicle for private hire.

With regard to the number of passenger seats that a Vehicle is authorised to carry, it is felt that the following amendments would be advisable in the interests of passenger safety and comfort:

- (a) The vehicle must have at least two bodyside doors for passengers excluding any rear door.
- (b) For vehicles with three or more rows of seats, rear seat passengers (i.e. all those seated behind the front row of seats) must have direct access to two doors.

Access from the doors to the seats must be direct, without the necessity for folding or moving seats or parts of the seats to gain access

#### **4.0 Implications**

5.1 Resources: Officer time

5.2 Legal: Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions ) act 1976

5.3 Strategy: Havant Borough Council has an agreed Licensing Policy and enforcement of breaches of the act is covered in this policy.

5.4 Risks: There are currently No electric or Hybrid Vehicles Licensed and it is thought that a clearer policy would lead to more drivers choosing a more environmentally friendly vehicle. There are no other foreseeable risks with this proposal.

With regard to passenger capacity, some existing Licensed Vehicles would fail to meet the new Specification and would need to be tolerated until such times as they are no longer licensed or are transferred and re-licensed in line with the new specification and Policy. It is likely that currently no more than 20 Vehicles would be affected by this change.

For the Community: The community will be provided with a form of public transport that is both safe and meets their needs, especially those with limited mobility

Integrated Impact Assessment: Attached at Appendix C

**6.0 Consultation** . No formal consultation is required. The recommendations are due to changes within the Taxi Industry. There has been ad hoc feedback from other Local Authority areas, customers and drivers.

Appendices:

- A. Draft of New Vehicle Specification.
- B. Copy of Current Vehicle Specification.
- C. Integrated Impact assessment

Agreed and signed off by Legal Services:

**Contact Officer:** Gerry THORNE  
**Job Title:** LICENSING OFFICER  
**Telephone:** 446653  
**E-Mail:** gerry.thorne@havant.gov.uk