

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Head of Refuse & Environment

TO: Licensing Committee

24/6/2013

WARDS: All

CONDITIONS FOR PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES EXEMPTED FROM DISPLAYING PLATES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cambridge City Council's policy allows proprietors of prestige type vehicles to seek permission to waive the requirement to display plates, door stickers and driver badges; however, no conditions have been agreed as to when such waivers should be granted.
- 1.2 This report proposes a set of conditions to be applied when waivers are sought and approved.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are requested to adopt the set of conditions set out in Appendix A of the report, which shall be applied where a request to waive the requirement to display licence plates, door stickers and driver badges has been made and an application approved.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's Taxi Policy (para 26.1) states: Proprietors of prestige type vehicles licensed as Private Hire vehicles, or Private Hire vehicles used in special circumstances, may seek the permission of the Authority to waive the conditions of their licence relating to the display of licence plates, door stickers and driver badges.
- 3.2 The general requirement to display plates, stickers and badges is to enable members of the public, in particular potential customers to identify a vehicle which has been licensed by the Council as meeting its standards of safety and that the driver is a fit and proper person.
- 3.3 However, customers who require the services of a prestige vehicle or a chauffeured limousine service to transport, for example, senior company executives, celebrities or visitors. In these cases, the type

of vehicle used to provide the service will be one which has a materially higher standard than a standard vehicle. Recognised makes include Mercedes, BMW, Audi, Jaguar and Lexus, but this is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list.

3.4 Other characteristics of vehicles which, generally, may come within the description of a prestige vehicle are:

- an engine size of 2000cc or over
- seats of adequate dimension and permitting direct access into and out of the vehicle without the need to move or fold another seat
- a passenger capacity not exceeding 4 persons, where passengers travel comfortably
- air conditioning / climate control to front and rear seats, all electric windows, central locking and headrests for all passengers

3.5 In order to maintain the elements of safety and security which characterise the general conditions attached to licences for Private Hire Vehicles, it would be appropriate to consider, when waiving requirements to display, to consider alternative conditions, which are appropriate to the circumstances of a prestige vehicle.

3.6 Prestige vehicles remain licensed as Private Hire vehicles and all journeys and contracts must be pre-booked through a licensed Operator, although such vehicles should be used solely to undertake prestige work and should not be despatched to customers in the ordinary way. Typically, such vehicles will have a limited number of regular customers who will be familiar with both the vehicle and its driver.

4. **CONSULTATIONS**

4.1 Officers have sought information from other authorities which allow exemptions as to what additional conditions are specified by them. These are typical of what is specified:

- In some cases the plate is replaced with a licence identification disc to be displayed in the front nearside of the windscreen. In other cases, the full licence plate is required to be fixed within the boot of the vehicle or in the glove compartment. Some authorities require both.
- When a booking is made, Operators are required to provide the hirer with the registration number of the vehicle and the name of the driver. Operators must keep and maintain a full record of bookings made and make it available to an authorised officer of the Council or a police officer, on request.
- Vehicles which are granted a plate exemption may not undertake standard, non-prestige private hire work.

- The Council's agreement to a plate exemption is required to be carried on the vehicle at all times and to be available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Council, a police officer or by the hirer of the vehicle, on request.
- Drivers are required to conform to a dress code, typically a suit or jacket and trousers and a shirt and tie and to have their driver's badge available for inspection, on request, and to identify himself or herself to the hirer.
- Payment for hirings may not be made direct to the driver, but be settled with the operator.
- The sale of alcoholic drinks in or from the vehicle is prohibited.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1 Members may determine whether the City Council should, in principle, attach conditions to the licences of private hire vehicles where a waiver, as described in section 3 above, (a plate exemption waiver) has been made, or simply to disapply conditions on application.
- 5.2 If it is determined that conditions should be attached, then Members should consider the conditions to be attached, to include all or any of those proposed in Appendix A and / or any others which they may consider relevant and necessary.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Members should determine whether to apply conditions to private hire vehicle licences when a waiver has been sought, in accordance with section 3 of this report.
- 6.2 If it is agreed that conditions should be applied, then Members should consider the conditions proposed in Appendix A and determine whether these should be adopted as appropriate to be applied when a waiver has been sought, or whether to attach such other conditions as they consider appropriate and necessary, .

7. IMPLICATIONS

(a) Financial Implications

Fees for the processing of licences should cover the cost of the work required, but on a non-profit basis.

(b) Staffing Implications

There should be no significant staffing implications

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

Nil

(d) **Environmental Implications**

Nil

(e) **Consultation and communication**

To be determined by committee

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Conditions for private hire vehicles with a plate exemption waiver

BACKGROUND PAPERS: The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

Documents from Reading, Wrexham and Stratford Councils

To inspect these documents contact Robert Osbourn on extension 7894

The author and contact officer for queries on the report is Robert Osbourn on extension 7894.

Report file: M:LICENSE/Licensing Committee mtgs/2013/Committee Report – Plate exemptions for 24.6.13

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Conditions to be applied to “plate exempt” vehicles

1. Vehicles granted a plate exemption waiver shall be used only for Prestige type hirings and shall not be used for standard private hirings.
2. The Council shall determine whether a vehicle for which a plate exemption waiver has been sought is suitable for use as a Prestige vehicle. The Council may consult any person or organisation it considers appropriate before coming to a decision on an application.
3. The Operator receiving a booking for a plate exempted vehicle shall provide the hirer with details of the vehicle registration number and the name of the driver, prior to the hiring commencing.
4. The private hire identification disc issued by the Council shall be displayed within the front nearside of the windscreen at all times.
5. The rear vehicle licence plate shall be securely fixed within the boot of the vehicle in a manner which enables it to be easily inspected.
6. The driver's badge shall be available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Council, a police officer or by the hirer of the vehicle, on request.
7. The Council's agreement to a plate exemption is required to be carried on the vehicle at all times and to be available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Council, a police officer or by the hirer of the vehicle, on request.
8. The driver of a plate exempted vehicle shall wear a suit, or jacket and trousers and a shirt and tie at all times when the vehicle is being used to fulfil a booking. Female drivers need not wear a tie.
9. The hirer shall not have the facility to settle accounts and / or tender direct payment to the driver by cash electronic payment of other means. Payment may only be accepted by means of credit or debit cards or other electronic payment system, with the operator, including an account system, either before or after the journey. Any cost incurred by the use of these payment methods shall be declared to the hirer before the booking is accepted by the operator.
10. No alcoholic drink shall be sold or purchased in or from the vehicle.