

REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE REGARDING INTRODUCTION OF LICENSED VEHICLE DOOR SIGNS

REPORT OF: Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services

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Wards Affected: All

Key Decision No

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide the Licensing Committee with details of draft door sign samples for a decision to be made on the preferred format in preparation of their introduction on 1st October 2022.

Summary

- 2 The Mid Sussex District Council Taxi and Private Hire Policy introduced the requirement for licensed vehicles to display the Mid Sussex logo identifying the vehicles as being licensed in Mid Sussex. Draft signs have been prepared for the Committees consideration

Recommendations

- 3 **That the Committee identify the type of door sign to be adopted and whether the signs are solely adhesive or if vehicle proprietors can mount them magnetically.**
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- 4 The Taxi and Private Hire Policy adopted by the Council mandates that from 1st October 2022 all licensed Hackney Carriage vehicles will be white in colour and will be marked with the Mid Sussex logo and the licence number on the rear passenger doors.
 - 5 From the same date Private Hire Vehicles will also be required to display signs with the Mid Sussex Logo, their licence number and the words "Private Hire Vehicle, Advanced Booking Only"
 - 6 The purpose of these licence conditions is to help protect the public. It will clearly identify Mid Sussex Licensed vehicles to provide reassurance to the travelling public that the vehicle and driver are locally licensed. The measure will assist the public in distinguishing between the two types of licensed vehicles.
 - 7 In preparation of the introduction of this vehicle condition the Licensing Team have obtained a selection of sample door signs that are available.
 - 8 The Licensing Committee are invited to assess the samples and advise the Licensing Team which signage they wish to adopt.

- 9 It is anticipated that the signs that are supplied will be adhesive and designed to be permanently fixed to the vehicles rather than have a magnetic backing so they are only temporarily fixed.
- 10 Currently the Authority permits door signs displayed on Private Hire Vehicles to be either permanently fixed or temporarily fixed with a magnetic backing.
- 11 There are issues surrounding magnetic signs. The ease of removal of magnetic signs leaves them vulnerable to theft and loss, and potentially their use on unlicensed vehicles. There have been several occasions where the currently permitted magnetic door signs on Private Hire Vehicles have become detached due to incorrect fitting, fixing them to the vehicle when it is dirty or not being stored properly when not in use. On roads with the national speed limit, they can become detached due to the speed of the vehicle. This poses a clear public safety risk if magnetic door signs were to be placed onto unlicensed vehicles.
- 12 For some vehicle proprietors, their licensed vehicle is the only family vehicle and when the vehicle is not being used for licensed purposes is utilised for family use by themselves. They prefer that the vehicle is not identified as a licensed vehicle when it is being used for this purpose. They take advantage of the ability to remove the signage when not working.
- 13 Magnetic signs are claimed to damage the vehicle paintwork less than adhesive ones, which can leave a discoloured mark on removal if they are attached for a long time. However, the ease of removal of magnetic signs leaves them vulnerable to theft and loss and also to use on unlicensed vehicles. As a licensed vehicle is always a licensed vehicle, no matter what it's use at the relevant time, there appears to be a compelling argument in favour of permanently attached adhesive signs.
- 14 As licensed vehicles, both Hackney and Private Hire, are working vehicles, the costs associated with their use, including depreciation must be considered and when balanced against the problems and risks associated with magnetic signs. The Committee may consider that this would be sufficient reason to require the use of adhesive signs only.
- 15 If magnetic signage is permitted then it will be the vehicle proprietors responsibility to provide the necessary magnetic backing sheet for both signs at their expense and they would be required to notify the Licensing Team immediately of the loss of any signage and to arrange the provision of replacement signs prior to returning to work.
- 16 There are two sample signs for each vehicle type for consideration.

Policy Context

- 17 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

47 Licensing of Hackney Carriages.

(1) A district council may attach to the grant of a licence of a hackney carriage under the Act of 1847 such conditions as the district council may consider reasonably necessary.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing subsection, a district council may require any hackney carriage licensed by them under the Act of 1847 to be of such design or appearance or bear such distinguishing marks as shall clearly identify it as a hackney carriage.

Section 48 Licensing of Private Hire Vehicles

(2) A district council may attach to the grant of a licence under this section such conditions as they may consider reasonably necessary including, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions of this subsection, conditions requiring or prohibiting the display of signs on or from the vehicle to which the licence relates.

- 18 The Licensing Policy is produced pursuant to powers conferred by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 as amended, which places a duty on the Council to carry out its licensing functions in respect of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles

Conditions relating to the issue of a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence state:

From 1 October 2022 they shall be white in colour and rear door panels must display the MSDC logo, with the words “Licensed Taxi” and licence number.

Conditions relating to the issue of a Private Hire Vehicle Licence state.

From 1 October 2022 they may not be white in colour and rear door panels must display the MSDC logo, with the words “Private Hire Vehicle, Advanced Booking Only” and the licence number.

Financial Implications

- 19 The Council keeps the fees and charges under review annually and aims to recover as much of the cost of regulating taxi and private hire licensing services as we are legally able, through fees and charges paid by applicants and licence holders. Any additional costs arising from implementing and enforcing the display of vehicle signs will be met where necessary through changes to taxi and private hire licence fees and charges.

Risk Management Implications

- 20 None

Equality and customer service implications

- 21 The policy is intended to protect the public, including those who are vulnerable owing to their age or disability.

Sustainability Implications

- 22 None for the purposes of this report.

Backing Papers

Appendix 1 – Example door signs