

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of People & Places	Licensing & Public Safety Committee	12 December 2012

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE CONDITIONS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To seek Members approval for the proposal relating to the requirement to provide a fire extinguisher.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That Members consider the report and approve the proposed changes made to the hackney carriage and private hire vehicle conditions relating to the removal of the requirement to provide a fire extinguisher.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	X

BACKGROUND

- Members of the Licensing Liaison Panel meeting held on 13th August 2012 made comments that the requirement to have a fire extinguisher in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles was contradictory to current guidance from the fire service. Concerns were also highlighted regarding the lack of training and understanding that drivers have on the use of fire extinguishers. The members of the panel felt their main priority was to get themselves and their passengers out and to a safe location.
- Officers were tasked with researching this issue and reporting the findings to the Licensing and Public Safety Committee.

CHANGES TO THE VEHICLE CONDITIONS

- There is currently a requirement within the private hire and hackney carriage vehicle conditions (appendix 1 & 2) to provide:

A 1kg (2.2lb) British standards fire extinguisher of the dry powder type shall be securely fitted to the vehicle so as to be readily available for use at all times. The fire extinguisher shall be maintained in good working order at all times.

The date when this condition was implemented is unknown but it is clear that it has been a requirement for many years.

7. Members of the Licensing Liaison Panel highlighted concerns regarding driver's competence and confidence in using a fire extinguisher in the event of a vehicle fire and that their main priority would be to get themselves and their passengers out and to a safe location. Officers were tasked with researching this issues and reporting the findings to members.
8. Mr Tony Clements, Fire Safety Enforcement Team Leader, Chorley Fire Station made the following statement when consulted regarding the issue:

I appreciate that there may be concerns regarding personal safety and I would advocate that an extinguisher should only be used if the operator feels confident to do so. From experience, I know that a car fire develops very quickly and a quick knock down with a portable extinguisher in the early stages is without doubt often the difference between losing or saving the vehicle.

The option of using the equipment obviously gives the chance to make such a difference and business continuity must surely be a consideration, as must the environmental impact of a car fire.

Another consideration must be the possibility of a road traffic collision preventing persons being able to easily get out of the car and a portable extinguisher would offer some protection should a fire ignite as a result of vehicle damage, not (necessarily the licensed vehicle).

Whilst I feel that carrying a fire extinguisher is generally a good idea for the reasons I previously stated, I fully appreciate the concerns from taxi operators in relation to personal safety and therefore feel that provision of fire extinguishers should not be insisted upon.

9. Officers cannot recall any instance where a driver or vehicle proprietor has ever attempted to tackle a vehicle fire or has had to discharge a fire extinguisher.
10. Should members approve to the removal of the condition then this would have immediate affect and relate to all existing and new hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

11. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	X	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

12. The proposed amendment to the licensing policy and conditions are in accordance with the Council legal powers under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Powers) Act 1976.

13. It is open to Committee to approve the removal of the condition based on all the relevant information and following consideration of the report.

JAMIE CARSON
DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE & PLACES

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Mr Paul Carter	5738	27/11/12	***