

LICENSING COMMITTEE (NON LICENSING ACT 2003 FUNCTIONS)

Agenda Item 26

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Blue Book Amendment - Private Hire Roof Signs		
Date of Meeting:	12 March 2020		
Report of:	Interim Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities		
Contact Officer:	Name: <i>Martin Seymour</i>	Tel: 29-6659	
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Wards Affected:	All		

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider that Private Hire Vehicles are no longer required to have a roof sign.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Members agree to remove the requirement for compulsory roof signs on Private Hire Vehicles. Proprietors that continue to have a roof sign on their vehicle must continue with the current specifications regarding livery **or**;
- 2.2 That all Private Hire Vehicles are required to have roof signs unless a livery exemption has been granted.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 It is proposed that the current mandatory requirement for PHV to have roof signs is changed to one being at the proprietor's or their operator's discretion. Private Hire Roof Signs were introduced approximately 30 years ago to give Private Hire Vehicle's equality with Hackney Carriages Vehicles to advertise an operator's telephone number and allow customers to recognise their preferred operator's vehicle arriving to pick them up. With the arrival of app-based booking systems where customers receive details of the vehicle and driver this has become less relevant with many apps giving details of the driver, vehicle and its arrival time and operators using 'call back' systems.
- 3.2 Private Hire Vehicles will still be required to have front & rear door signage as well as displaying a plate on the rear of the vehicle. However, current policy needs clarifying

as the Blue Book, in paragraph 150.5 states that a private hire vehicle must have a roof sign unless exempt from displaying livery. The roof sign shown must have the same single telephone number or; company name/logo matching the door sign on the vehicle on the front and back of the roof sign. However, in paragraph 156. the Blue Book states that “an approved roof sign **may** be displayed.

- 3.3 Since the introduction of the Council’s livery exemption policy a significant number of proprietors consider such a roof sign to be an unnecessary burden on their business. There is also a belief that a roof sign may cause confusion to the public as the vehicle can give the appearance of a licensed hackney carriage for hire especially when the roof sign is illuminated. It has increasingly apparent that proprietors are disregarding this requirement following the growth of app-based operators that do not have a phone number for customers to call or by drivers who work on multiple operator circuits as it confuses passengers waiting for their preferred operator.
- 3.4 The Taxi Licensing Office regularly receives complaints from licensed drivers reporting incidents of vehicles without roof signs which involve a disproportionate amount of officer time in enforcing licensing conditions. In addition, before the current livery exemption policy the livery exemption was based on a roof sign exemption which is still reflected in the Blue Book which states “An approved roof sign **may** be displayed” which has added some confusion amongst proprietors as to the need to have a roof sign.
- 3.5 The practice of displaying a vehicle plate and door signs is to ensure clear identification of licensed vehicles by licensing officers, police officers and the hiring public. A strict policy in displaying plates can help prevent the highly illegal practice of unlicensed vehicles operating for hire and reward and can also prevent confusion with hackney carriage vehicles.
- 3.6 The taxi forum and drivers were consulted regarding this proposed change of policy. A copy of the consultation can be found at Appendix A
- 3.7 11 responses were received from the trade (see Appendix B) 5 of which supported the proposal and 1 joint response from the Sudanese Taxi Forum, United Taxi Driver Association, City Cabs, Radio Cabs, Streamline, IDB&H, Unite & GMB (see Appendix C) who do not support the proposal.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1. This matter was discussed at the Brighton & Hove Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Consultation Forum and a formal consultation was undertaken with the trade.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michael Bentley Date: 17.01.2020

Legal Implications:

5.2. The power to attach conditions to Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles comes from Sections 47 and 48 of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976. Such conditions should be 'reasonably necessary'. Regard should be had to the consultation responses.

Lawyer Consulted: Rebecca Sidell Date: 16.01.2020

Equalities Implications:

5.3 Licensing authorities must ensure that a safe hackney carriage and private hire vehicle service is freely available to meet the demand across all sectors of the public, especially those vulnerable groups to whom a taxi or private hire vehicle is often the only means of completing a journey

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 None.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 Contained in the body of the report.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1. Option 1

 Keep existing Policy.

6.2. Option 2

 Make Private Hire Roof Signs Optional

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. To make Private Hire Roof Signs Optional.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Consultation Document

2. Trade Responses

3. Joint Trade Response

