

REPORT TO:	Licensing Committee
DATE:	8 th March 2018
LEAD OFFICER:	Head of Planning and Public Protection
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SUBJECT:	Proposed amendments to the existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Specifications

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For Members to consider further amendments to the existing hackney carriage and private hire vehicle specifications.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Since the implementation of the new policy in July 2017, it has been brought to Officers attention that the section relating to doors is unclear and the section relating to wheelchair accessibility is restrictive and may have unintended consequences on the taxi industry. Officers are proposing an amended text to the relevant paragraphs in the vehicle specification for Members consideration and approval.

3. POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION

- 3.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and Town Police Clauses Act 1847.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 As a reminder to Members, the existing hackney carriage and private hire vehicle policy, together with vehicle specification and conditions, was approved at the December 2016 committee meeting, following extensive consultation, and came into effect on the 1st of July 2017.
- 4.2 At a further Meeting of the Licensing Committee, in December last year, Members considered and approved some alterations to the vehicle specification relating mainly to the seating specification.

- 4.3 A further request from the trade has been made to review Section 3.11.1 (relating to Private Hire) and 6.5.1 (Hackney Carriage) of the vehicle specification relating to doors.
- 4.4 For Members information 3.11.1 and 6.5.1 reads:
“The vehicle shall have a minimum of 4 side opening doors which are easily accessible to passengers. Access to and from vehicles such as minibuses will be determined on a case by case basis eg the rear door should not be a means of access.”
- 4.5 The concern from the trade relates to minibus/MPV type vehicles that may not have 4 side opening doors, and it is worthy to note that a large proportion of minibuses/MPV type vehicles would not be able to meet the above specification.
- 4.6 It is also their concern that determining minibuses on a case by case basis does not provide them with the clarity when looking to replace their vehicles. This has the potential to lead to differing opinions in turn to refusals and possible appeals.
- 4.7 It is therefore proposed to modify section 3.11.1 and 6.5.1 to read:
“All saloons, estates or purpose built taxi vehicles shall have at least four side-opening doors, which may be opened from the inside and the outside. Minibuses, transits and people carrier type vehicles shall have at least three doors not including any tailgate or rear doors.”
- 4.8 There is an increasing desire by companies to offer full access for all in the community to taxis. Sections 3.14.1 and 6.8.1 of our vehicle specification limits wheelchair access to vehicles only with ramp access at a nearside door – *“A ramp or ramps for the loading of a wheelchair and passenger shall be available at all times for use at the nearside rear passenger door”*. Whilst there are not significant numbers of vehicles on the fleet that have rear access for wheelchairs this type of accessible vehicle is becoming more prominent on the roads.
- 4.9 The vehicle specification already includes references to safe loading / unloading and securing wheelchairs along with the use of associated lifting equipment – as is often associated with this type of accessible vehicle. It is therefore proposed to amend sections 3.14.1 and 6.8.1 to read:
“A ramp or ramps, or appropriate lifting equipment, for the loading of a wheelchair and passenger shall be available at all times for use at the nearside or rear passenger door”

5. **CONSIDERATION**

- 5.1 For Members to consider the contents of the report and if Members are minded to approve such modifications it would benefit licence holders by clarifying what vehicles would be suitable to be accepted as a licensed vehicle.

6. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 For Members to consider all the information contained in this report and approve the amendments as detailed in paragraphs 4.7 and 4.9, to come into force with immediate effect.