

**HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE CONSULTATIVE
BOARD****2 JUNE 1999**

This report may be of interest to: All Members

PROVISION OF HIRE DOOR SIGNS FOR PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek the **Boards** approval to introduce door signs for Private Hire Vehicles that clearly set out the procedure for booking and outlines the implications should these procedures not be adhered to.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Quite distinct and separate sets of criteria exist determining how Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles can accept bookings. These are determined, in **the** most part, by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Town Police Clauses Act 1847. Whilst Hackney Carriages can be approached directly by customers on ranks or hailed, Private Hire Vehicles need to have been booked in advance through the operator. There is some concern at present that the different criteria are not readily apparent and the introduction of signs on Private Hire Vehicles that detail such criteria will heighten public awareness.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 **That door signs be introduced for Private Hire Vehicles, subject to consultation with the trade, to increase public awareness of the rules governing the trade both to ensure public protection and to aid enforcement of unlawful 'plying for hire'.**

4. **Background**

4.1 There are currently in excess of 400 Private Hire vehicles and 78 Hackney Carriage vehicles operating in Milton Keynes and the two sectors service the customer by quite separate means as outlined **in the report summary**.

4.2 A particular problem in Milton Keynes is the growing number of Private Hire vehicles which 'Ply for Hire' which means unlawfully accepting fares from customers without a prior booking. Whilst every effort is made through enforcement activity to minimise the practice it is virtually impossible, given the level of resources, to eradicate it completely.

5. **Issues and Choices**

5.1 The major concern about this practice is that any passenger accepting such a booking is not covered through the vehicles insurance as the driver is only covered to accept prior bookings through an operator. It also creates considerable friction between the two sectors.

5.2 The introduction of a clear door sign preferably on both back doors or at least on the near side should detail:

- (a) How the vehicle should be booked;
- (b) Who it should be booked through;
- (c) The implication in terms of insurance by entering the vehicle; **and**
- (d) What vehicle should be used from the rank (where most plying for hire occurs).

5.3 Existing terms and conditions allow for the provision of such signs which instruct the proprietor to ensure vehicle drivers display any sign or notice relating to Private Hire Vehicles which the Council may from time to time require. **(Moved from original recommendation as is a point of information and not a decision)**

5.4 The advantage of **these proposals** would be two fold. Firstly it will increase customer awareness on the rules governing the trade and assist in the enforcement of plying for hire.

5.5 The problem of plying for hire increases in line with the number of Private Hire Vehicles which has doubled over the last five years. It is an issue that has to be taken seriously because of the problems identified earlier. Recruiting more enforcement staff is costly and will not guarantee solving the problem. The option of utilising door signs is relatively inexpensive and does increase customer awareness.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

There are no environmental implications

6.2 Equalities

There are no equalities implications

6.3 Financial

There will be an initial cost of £650 for purchasing the signs and an annual on going cost of £100. This can be contained within the existing supplies and services budget.

6.4 Legal

Clause three of **the Councils' Private Hire Vehicle Licence Conditions, written in accordance with the local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976,** enables the Council to **request** signs to be demonstrated which they might from time to time require.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

There are no staff or accommodation implications.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 Milton Keynes, in keeping with many authorities, has a growing problem with Private Hire Vehicles plying for hire. The introduction of appropriately worded signs will act as a low cost deterrent to this activity.

7.2 It will also provide information to potential customers who may be unaware of the distinction between the sectors and may be undertaking an unlawful and uninsured journey.

Background Papers: Private Hire Vehicle Licence - Conditions