



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH ON 13 APRIL 2010**

Present: Councillor Newton (Chair), Nawaz, Morley, Winslade, Swift and Saltmarsh

Officers in attendance: John Goodwin, Regulatory Officer
Colin Miles, Lawyer
Gemma George, Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Dobbs, Thacker (Vice Chair) and Khan.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 June 2009

The minutes of the meeting held 16 June 2009 were approved as an accurate and true record.

4. Changes in the Licensing Conditions for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licences

The Committee received a report which revisited its decision of the 10 March 2009. It had previously been agreed that the completion of a NVQ / VRQ qualification would become mandatory for all new and existing hackney carriage and private hire drivers. It had also been agreed that new compulsory standardised and permanently affixed door stickers would be applied to the rear passenger doors of all private hire vehicles. The stickers would read "Private Hire Vehicle – Insurance Invalid Unless Pre-Booked with Operator". An amendment of Condition 2(c) of the Private Hire Conditions in relation to the implementation of the door stickers had also previously been agreed by the Committee. Vehicles solely used for corporate or airport work would perhaps be eligible for an exemption from the requirement to display the door signage.

Members were advised that NVQ / VRQ training providers had found it increasingly difficult to obtain funding in order to allow courses to run. As a consequence of this, the cost of the course would have to be independently funded by the drivers. It had also been evident that there were variations in content and delivery of the NVQ and VRQ between the different providers. As a result of the inconsistencies and funding difficulties it was recommended that the requirement for mandatory NVQ / VRQ training was withdrawn.

The requirement for a mandatory condition relating to door signs continued to remain valid. The implementation of the door signage would ensure consistency and uniformity. It was accepted that some private hire vehicles were solely used for airport or executive purposes. This had been highlighted during the initial consultation, where some companies had stated that the display of signage could affect this aspect of their business. It was therefore acknowledged that it may be appropriate to offer an exemption to certain individually identified vehicles, on the proviso that assurances were made that the vehicle would not be used for normal private hire work.

Members were invited to comment on the report and the following issues were highlighted:

- Members expressed concern regarding the removal of the requirement to undergo NVQ / VRQ training. Could alternate training be provided for free, particularly in relation to dealing with disabled passengers? Members were advised that this request would be looked into. Members were further advised that a video was shown to all Hackney carriage drivers which detailed how to load and unload a passenger in a wheelchair.
- Members queried why some private hire vehicles displayed no signage at all. Members were informed that there were no points under legislation which stated that signage had to be displayed. A benchmarking exercise which had been undertaken against other authorities had shown that a number of them required permanent door signage and a number of them were also looking to amend their conditions to state that permanent signage was required.

RESOLVED:

1. to revoke the 10 March 2009 decision concerning the mandatory completion of the NVQ / VRQ qualifications and remove the specification criteria
2. to re-affirm the decision with regard to mandatory door signs and to approve the amendment of licensing condition 2(c)

Reasons for the Decision:

The funding issues had caused difficulties for drivers trying to obtain the NVQ course. The government had, at that stage, frozen or limited funding, making it impossible for the training providers to enrol drivers for future courses. If the NVQ remained a mandatory requirement of fitness, the driver or new applicant, would be required to pay for the training themselves.

The implementation of door signage would increase public education and would ensure consistency. Uniformed signage would help decrease the risk of private hire drivers unlawfully plying for hire and the public being carried uninsured as a result. The introduction of the signage would also help to reduce the number of unlicensed vehicles operating as taxis in Peterborough.

9.30am – 9.45am
Chairman