

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE – 14 NOVEMBER 2008**PASSENGER LICENSING CAPACITY FOR CERTAIN MULTI PURPOSE TAXI VEHICLES****1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Following informal discussions held with representatives of the New Forest Taxi Association, the purpose of the report is to invite members of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee to debate the current direct access seating policy when determining the number of seats and therefore the passenger capacity of certain multi purpose taxi vehicles (MPV).

2 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 2.1 On 16 January 2004 the General Purposes and Licensing Committee resolved that; “the Committee reiterates its current policy of continuing to licence MPV’s only in cases where: all passengers have direct access to a door without the need to climb over the rear of any seat or the need to lower the back of the seat”. This maintained the Council’s previous position on this issue which results in the removal of a seat or seats in order for these types of vehicles to comply with said policy.

- 2.2 On 13 January 2006 the General Purposes and Licensing Committee re-examined certain aspects of this policy at the request of taxi traders. Once again the Committee resolved that; “vehicles with more than four passenger seats be licensed only in cases where:

all passengers have direct access to a door without the need to climb over the rear of any seat or the need to lower the back of the seat; and

seats are not sited sideways to the direction of travel; and

all seats comply fully with seat belt regulations; and

there is sufficient, adequate, and secure storage space for luggage within the vehicle for as many passengers as it is licensed to carry; and

the arrangements for storing luggage must not obstruct access to the vehicle exits or affect passenger safety, comfort or mobility.”

- 2.3 Recent innovations in car designs regarding seat deployment have made this policy more difficult to interpret and impose consistently across the wide spectrum of vehicles that are being proposed for licensing by this Authority. There are several newly constructed vehicles whereby passengers do not either have to ‘climb over’ or have a need to ‘lower the back of the seat’ to alight from the vehicle. Yet there is still no direct access to a door because the seats can be moved, either by folding or sliding, by the use of simple and easy new ‘quick release’ safety mechanisms. The focus of this report is solely regarding this issue and not any other policy restrictions, as detailed above.

3 POLICIES OF OTHER COUNCILS

- 3.1 When comparing policies of other councils in relation to capacity numbers for these vehicles, it would appear that more licensing authorities in Hampshire are relaxing the direct access restrictions and allowing the passenger capacity to align itself with the manufacturers recommended figure, as detailed below.

Year	Number of Hampshire Councils with direct access conditions
2004	10 from 13
2006	8 from 13
2008	5 from 13

- 3.2 The table below gives a comparison with the policies of other neighbouring Council's.

Authority	Policy conditions regarding direct access
Christchurch	None
East Dorset	None
Test Valley	None
Southampton	None

4 VIEWING

- 4.1 To facilitate proper examination, arrangements have been made for the Committee to view a vehicle that is manufactured with the quick release seat mechanism.

5 NEW FOREST TAXI ASSOCIATION

- 5.1 The Association were responsible for instigating this matter and would like the Committee to consider that; MPV vehicles which incorporate this type of seat mechanisms by manufacturers should be allowed to be licensed for their full seating capacity, providing that they adhere to all the other capacity and seating conditions applicable to NFDC policy conditions.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no anticipated financial implications arising from this report.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no environmental factors other than a subtle change in policy may reduce the carbon footprint for passengers by allowing operators to consider using more modern and cost effective vehicles.

8 CRIME & DISORDER

- 8.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

9 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- 9.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from the licensing of stretch limousines.

10 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 That after considering this report, background papers and the vehicle produced for inspection the Committee decide on the following options:
- (a) To amend the current policy for licensing vehicles with more than four passenger seats; that all passengers must have direct access to a door without the need to climb over the rear of any seat or the need to lower the back of the seat or release, tip or slide any seat no matter what type of catch release system or mechanism is used; or
 - (b) To allow vehicles that use said mechanism the opportunity to be licensed for a passenger capacity, as agreed by the Council's licensing services, providing that they comply with all the remaining relevant policy conditions.

Further information:

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Background papers:

Minutes General Purposes and
Licensing Committee 16 January
2004

Minutes General Purposes and
Licensing Committee 13 January
2006