

22 February 2022		ITEM: 6
Licensing Committee		
Electric Private Hire Vehicles		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Paul Adams, Licensing Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Public Protection		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director of Public Realm		
This report is: Public		

Executive Summary

This report considers the proposed amendment of the current Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy to allow for the use of a wider range of electric vehicles.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1. That the Committee–

- (a) **Agrees to amend the Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards to include the electric vehicle section as in section 3.3 of this report.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock Council's current Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards sets out the specification for any vehicle that is used as a Private Hire Vehicle must meet to be considered suitable for licensing. Similar standards exist for Hackney Carriage Vehicles. The Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards at attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 With the rapid development of electric vehicles in recent years, and the rollout of charging infrastructure across the borough and country, the use of electric vehicles is becoming more common place on our roads, including their use by the private hire industry.
- 2.3 Larger electric vehicles that meet the current specification to be considered suitable as licensed vehicles are significantly more expensive to purchase

than their fuel based equivalent. On average electric models are typically at least £6,000 - £8,000 more expensive.

- 2.4 Legislation requires that all journeys undertaken by private hire vehicles must be pre booked, unlike a Hackney carriage vehicle which can be hired from a taxi rank or hailed in a street. This gives a private hire operator to know who they are collecting, what they are intending to carry, and where the journey is to.
- 2.5 As journeys are prebooked, the private hire operator can dispatch a vehicle that can carry the number of people required along with a known amount of luggage, for a distance that is pre known. For bookings for single occupants, with minimal luggage a smaller vehicle may be more appropriate and economical to use.
- 2.6 The use of smaller electric vehicles has been considered by some of the local private hire industry, particularly where a large percentage of their jobs are locally based around single commuters. The Licensing Sub Committee has considered an application for a small electric vehicle and did on that occasion agree to depart for the council's policy and approved the use of that one vehicle type. This decision was based on the individual circumstances and is not binding on any future decision of this committee or any other sub-committee but can be taken into account.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The current Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards, restricts the type of vehicle that can be used. Particularly around the size of the vehicle that is considered appropriate, in particular the following sections:
 - *1.6. Be suitable in size and design for use as a Private Hire Vehicle and to the manufacturers specification have:*
 - 1.6.1. *Rear Seat (width): The width of the rear seats, measured in a straight line widthways on the front edge of the seat must be such as will allow adequate seating accommodation to the extent of a minimum of 42cm (16 ½ ").*
 - 1.6.2. *Seats (length): The length of the seat from the squab to the front edge must be a minimum of 43cm (17")*
 - 1.6.3. *Knee Space: The measurement between the rear of the front seats and the squab of the backseat must be a minimum of 66cm (26") with the front seat at its centre point.*
 - *1.9. Have rear seat accommodation for not less than three passengers, unless the safe carriage of a passenger seated in a wheelchair necessitates the removal of any seat(s).*

- *1.10 Have accommodation for not less than 4 passengers.*
- *1.13 Have adequate luggage facilities, which must be provided separate from the passenger carrying compartment. All vehicles must be capable of carrying a wheelchair, folded down if appropriate, in a reasonable manner.*

3.2 To promote the use of electric vehicle used across the private hire industry in Thurrock it is proposed to amend the existing Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards, to include a section relating to electric vehicles only, which would allow smaller vehicles than normal permitted to be used.

3.3 The electric vehicle section would read as follows:

- Hybrid vehicles are not included in this section, only fully electric vehicles are subject to these alternative standards.
- The vehicle must be suitable in size and design for use as a Private Hire Vehicle.
- The number of passengers that the vehicle will be licensed to carry will be determined by the seat size as specified in sections 1.6.1 – 1.6.3 above. Any seats that do not meet the size specification will not be included in the vehicle's capacity, regardless of the number of seats shown on the vehicle logbook.
- The number of passengers that the vehicle is licensed to carry can be less than 4.
- The vehicle must have adequate luggage facilities, which must be provided separate from the passenger carrying compartment. As a minimum, vehicles must be capable of carrying a wheelchair, folded down if appropriate, in a reasonable manner.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The change to the vehicle specification would encourage the use of electric vehicles for the private hire industry, allowing for cheaper green alternatives to be introduced to the fleet.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 It is not proposed to undertake consultation in relation to this change in standard. The change will not adversely impact the trade or the public but will promote the use of green vehicles locally.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 None.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Simon Scrowther**
Principal Lawyer

The Council's Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards sets out the Council's policy on the type and specifications of vehicles it considers suitable for licensing. Any previous departure from that policy based on the individual circumstances of a case does not bind this committee into changing its policy but may be a consideration.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy gives consideration to those with disabilities by ensuring vehicles are wheelchair accessible. The proposed amendments to the policy do not alter this consideration and would not have any equality or diversity implications

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

- None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- **Appendix 1** – Thurrock Council's Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards

Report Author:

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