

LICENSING COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 14 JULY 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD IN REMOTELY VIA SKYPE ON TUESDAY, 14 JULY 2020 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor DRW Lewis – Chairperson

PA Davies  
AA Pucella  
TH Beedle

JE Lewis  
JE Williams

RM James  
MJ Kearns

RJ Collins  
A Hussain

Apologies for Absence

B Jones and G Thomas

Officers:

Kirsty Evans	Senior Licensing Officer
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Andrea Lee	Senior Lawyer
Yvonne Witchell	Team Manager Licensing
Sharon Jones	Licensing Assistant
Michael Pitman	Democratic Services Officer – Committees

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

43. APPLICATION TO LICENCE PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE

The Team Manager – Licensing presented a report, the purpose of which, was to ask the sub-committee to consider an application to grant a licence for a private hire vehicle.

The application was made by Stacey Jones and Christopher Jones of Bridged to licence a Mercedes E220d vehicle registration number KJ17 FHW as a private hire vehicle to seat 4 persons.

The vehicle is pre-owned and was first registered at the DVLA on 7 June 2017.

The application falls outside the Private Hire Vehicle Policy approved by the Licensing Committee due to age of the vehicle and policy guidelines. The vehicle was also not wheelchair accessible. A service report has been submitted for the 6 March 2019 with the mileage recorded at 24923 and for the 14 October 2019 with mileage at 39912.

On the 2 July 2020 the vehicle was inspected by a Licensing Enforcement Officer and the vehicle was found to be in good condition. A Vehicle Assessment form is provided at Appendix A and photographs of the vehicle in Appendix B.

The Committee retired to consider the application further, whereupon on their return, it was

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered the application to register vehicle KJ17 FHW as a Private Hire Vehicle.

Members noted that it fell outside of the Licensing Policy provision 2.1, due to the vehicles age and mileage.

Members noted that the policy could be relaxed as set out in paragraph 2.2 (of the policy), namely the exceptional interior and exterior quality and the exceptional standards of safety.

For these reasons, the Committee granted the licence.

44. APPLICATION TO LICENCE PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE

The Team Manager – Licensing presented a report, the purpose of which, was to ask the sub-committee to consider an application to grant a licence for a private hire vehicle.

Application was made by G & S Travel Limited of Ogmores Vale to licence a Mercedes Vito vehicle registration number KJ18 HHZ as a private hire vehicle to seat 7 persons.

The vehicle is pre-owned and was first registered at the DVLA on 22 June 2018.

The application falls outside the Private Hire Vehicle Policy approved by the Licensing Committee due to age policy guidelines. The vehicle is not wheelchair accessible. A service report has been submitted for the 17 March 2020 with the mileage recorded at 20074.

On the 30 June 2020 a Licensing Enforcement Officer inspected the vehicle and the vehicle was found to be in good condition. A Vehicle Assessment form is provided at Appendix A and photographs of the vehicle in Appendix B.

The Committee retired to consider the application further, whereupon on their return, it was

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered the application to register vehicle KJ18 HHZ as a Private Hire Vehicle.

Members noted that it fell outside of the Licensing Policy provision 2.1, due to the vehicles age and mileage.

Members noted that the policy could be relaxed as set out in paragraph 2.2 (of the policy), namely the exceptional interior and exterior quality and the exceptional standards of safety.

For these reasons, the Committee granted the licence.

45. POLICY ON DETERMINING THE SUITABILITY OF PROTECTIVE SCREENS IN HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Licensing Policy Officer presented a report, in order for Members to consider the adoption and publication of a policy on “Temporary Screens in Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles” following consultation with the trade.

She advised that the Licensing Authority have received requests from the trade urging the Licensing Department to push through greater in-car safety measures to guard against Covid-19 including the use of safety

screens. According to the Office of National Statistics taxi drivers have one of the highest mortality rates of any other occupation in the UK.

A draft policy document has been produced, and approved by the Directors of Public Protection in Wales (DPPW), detailing the requirements and approval procedure for the use of screens in vehicles. A copy of this draft policy was attached at Appendix A to the report.

In Bridgend, as at 6 July 2020, there have been a total number of 554 confirmed cases of Covid-19 out of a local population of 147,049; this compares to a total of 15,890 confirmed cases in Wales. As at 26 June there had been 90 Covid related deaths in Bridgend.

It is understandable that licence holders will want to put measures in place in order to protect themselves from the transmission of Covid-19. However, this must not impact the safety or integrity of the vehicle.

With the restrictions starting to ease, more and more taxi and private hire drivers are looking to return to work attempting to ensure that they do their utmost to protect themselves and their passengers. Temporary screens in vehicles have been at the forefront of enquiries from the trade in the hope that a physical separation between drivers and passengers may reduce the transmission of Covid-19.

In response to the requests from the trade to install screens in licensed vehicles, the Licensing Expert Panel, made up of representatives from the 22 Welsh local authority Licensing Departments, set up a working group in order to produce guidance for Licensing Authorities to adopt, with the intention of harmonising the approach to the approval of screen installations in Wales.

She explained that there are various types of screens on the market, including flexible plastic screens that wrap around the driver and can be easily removed, to rigid polycarbonate plastic screens that have been attached by way of nuts, bolts and rivets to the seats or other interior vehicle trim.

The proposed policy is intended to provide guiding principles on how the Licensing Authority will deal with such requests from licence holders who may wish to install a screen in their vehicle. There were a number of safety concerns associated with screens, for example, the potential to interfere with original features of the vehicle such as the side airbags or the movement of the driver's seat and looks to set out specific requirements to satisfy these concerns.

Paragraph 4.7 of the report, then outlined what the requirements of the policy included.

The Licensing Authority has consulted the trade on the proposed policy, which included a number of licensed operators as well as drivers.

One response was received in relation to this consultation. This response was from a licensed operator within Bridgend County Borough Council, Valley Cars, who advised that they would not be looking to install screens in their vehicles.

No other responses were received.

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A Member noted that Valley Cars were not intending to install any such protective screens and he asked, could the Licensing Authority enforce the use of screens in taxi's.

The Licensing Policy Officer replied that there was currently no firm evidence that installing screens would reduce transmission of the illness, so in light of this, it would be disproportionate for the Licensing Authority to make it compulsory for all taxi drivers/operators to install screens in their vehicles.

A Member asked if there as yet been any firm directive for taxi drivers to wear masks whilst on duty and to insist that passengers similarly wore such masks.

The Licensing Policy Officer confirmed that this was one of a package of measures that were being looked at by the UK government and Welsh Government also. She added that in Wales it was proposed that from 27 July, it would be mandatory for users of public transport to wear masks.

In response to a further question, she stated that if any screens were introduced in taxi's, then they would have to meet required safety standards that had been introduced through any regulations and policy guidance introduced as a result of Covid 19.

RESOLVED:                      That Committee:

- (i)      Adopted the Temporary Screens in Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles Policy detailed in Appendix A of the report.
- (ii)     Agreed that the decision to approve a screen for use in a taxi or private hire vehicle be delegated to the Chief Officer of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services.

### 46. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 11:15