



Northumberland County Council

Licensing & Regulatory Committee

Wednesday, 14 February 2024

Fire Extinguisher Training Requirement for Taxis and Private Hire Drivers

Report of Councillor(s) [Cllr Gordon Stewart](#), Portfolio Holder, Looking After our Communities ,

Responsible Officer(s): Darin Wilson, Head of Public Protection,

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report is relates to the Corporate Plans priorities: achieving value for money.

2. Purpose of report

To seek approval for the Licensing Service to consult with licence holders to amend conditions of application for hackney carriage and private hire driver licences to include requirement for training in the use of fire extinguishers.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Members note the content of the report and agree to a consultation in respect of the implementation of the following application requirement for hackney carriage and private hire driver applicants:

All applications for hackney carriage and private hire drivers to include evidence of the attendance and completion of an approved training course in the use of fire extinguishers.

- 3.2 To approve the courses listed within Appendix A as relevant training courses to be consulted on.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Not applicable.

5. Background

5.1 The principal legislation associated with Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing and associated matters is contained within the:

- Town Police Clauses Act 1847
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Transport Act 1985

5.2 Whilst the law provides a framework for licensing and sets out in general terms the standards to be met before a licence may be approved, it is not prescriptive and allows local authorities to develop local arrangements and to attach conditions to some licences which are considered “reasonably necessary”.

5.3 The licences administered by the Council under the above legislation are:

- Hackney Carriage Proprietors licence
- Hackney Carriage Drivers licence
- Private Hire Vehicle Proprietors Licence
- Private Hire Drivers Licence
- Private Hire Operators Licence

5.4 The Council has a policy in relation to hackney carriage and private hire licensing. The policy contains requirements of applications and the conditions imposed on licences when granted.

5.5 The current standard conditions for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licences require the vehicle to have fire extinguishers. Although the current conditions require the licence holder to ensure the equipment is within the vehicle, there has never been any requirement for them to be used or training to be undertaken.

5.6 Following a request from the committee in considering whether the conditions should remain, Members determined that the condition should continue to be placed on licences and that officers investigate relevant training courses for possible inclusion as conditions of driver applications.

5.7 When making significant changes to application require or conditions it is best practice to consult on these changes prior to their introduction.

5.8 On 26th October 2022, the Licensing and Regulatory Committee considered a report by the Head of Public Protection to agree to a consultation on a proposal to remove fire extinguishers and first aid kit requirement.

The consultation ran for 12 weeks up to the 25th of January 2023. 90 responses were received. Out of the responses received 77 agreed with the proposal to remove the condition and 13 disagreed.

- 5.9 Colleagues in Integrated Transport were also contacted, who, in their opinion, felt the requirement should remain in place when drivers are transporting children or vulnerable adults in case of minor injuries. They also stated that most vehicles used in transporting wheelchair users have been modified with aftermarket ramps and doors, these although tested add load onto the main system so a fire extinguisher is a good safety measure with all the extra electrics in the vehicle.
- 5.10 The report went back to Committee in August 2023, where members resolved that the conditions to be retained and a report be brought back to the next committee on training requirements.
- 5.11 Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service have provided the following guidance;
Emergency equipment
 8.19 *The National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) recommend that licensing authorities require fire extinguishers to be provided in vehicles, should ensure that suitable and sufficient training is received by the drivers.*
- 8.20 *The NFCC’s advice is that if a licensing authority elects not to require drivers to undertake training on the safe way to tackle a vehicle fire, vehicles should not be required to carry fire extinguishers and drivers advised to get out and stay out of the vehicle and call 999, rather than attempting to firefight.*
- 5.12 We have contacted other regional local authorities to establish what their policy is on the requirement. The below authorities were contacted; Middlesbrough- no requirement Darlington- Yes still require Durham - Yes, but looking to remove the requirement Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council- Yes still require Hartlepool- no requirement North Tyneside- no requirement.

6. Implications

Policy	Proposal for consultation to amend the hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy.
Finance and value for money	No financial implications expected for the Council however it will require additional costs for all hackney carriage and private hire driver applications.
Legal	None identified
Procurement	None have been identified.
Human resources	Resources required in relation to administering consultation. This would be completed using current staffing arrangements.

Property	None identified
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No.
Risk assessment	None have been identified.
Crime and disorder	None have been identified
Customer considerations	Customer consideration can be taken into account following consultation with licence holders.
Carbon reduction	None have been identified.
Health and wellbeing	None have been identified
Wards	All

7. Background papers

Not applicable

8. Links to other key reports already published

Licensing and Regulatory Report - Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy – Fire Extinguishers and First Aid Kits 15th February 2023

9. Author and Contact Details

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