

**Taxis and Private Hire Cars
Suitability of Electric Vehicles****Report by Director, Resources****1 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to ask the Committee to consider whether electric and hybrid vehicles should be licensed as Private Hire Cars or Taxis and to agree any consequential changes to the Licensing Conditions for Taxis and Private Hire Cars.

2 Background

- 2.1** The Council's Conditions of Licensing of Taxis, Private Hire Cars and Drivers require that for private hire cars the vehicle must have an engine capacity of 1600cc. The conditions assume that vehicles will be powered by liquid petroleum fuel and the wording effectively precludes the use of electric vehicles as these cars do not have an engine capacity as such.

Technology around electric vehicles has advanced considerably since the Conditions were last reviewed. Electric and hybrid cars are cheaper to run and reduce emissions and air pollution. The Energy Savings Trust advise that there are 140 rapid charging points in Scotland and over 600 other (less powerful) chargers. In addition the Trust has a system of grants to provide private hire and taxi drivers with free home charging points.

Midlothian Council is one of only 7 local authorities in Scotland who do not allow electric or hybrid vehicles to operate as Private Hire Cars.

Should the Committee be minded to allow electric and hybrid vehicles to operate as private hire cars then Condition 14 of the Conditions which states "The vehicle must have an engine capacity of not less than 1600cc" will need to be replaced.

It is considered that a power to weight ratio which divides the Brake Horse Power by the vehicle weight is a more accurate method of assessing a vehicle's power and consequent ability to carry a full load of passengers.

Tests by the Taxi Assessment Centre on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council have indicated that a power to weight ratio of 0.0690 hp per kp would be sufficient to allow a vehicle to be used in a commercial capacity.

Accordingly, if the Committee are so minded, it is recommended that the following words replace the existing condition 14 for private hire cars:

“The vehicle must have an engine capacity with a “Power to Weight” ratio equal to or greater than 0.0690 hp per kg.”

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no resource implications arising from this report. Inspections by the Taxi Examination Centre are covered by the application fee.

3.2 Risk

There are no risk implications. Vehicles will continue to be examined by the taxi Examination Centre to ensure they are fit for purpose.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- X None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Not applicable

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Not applicable

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not applicable

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Not applicable

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

Not applicable

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The ability to licence vehicles which are potentially less damaging to the environment will have a positive effect.

3.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

4 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to

a) consider whether to allow electricity powered vehicles (including hybrid vehicles) to be licensed as Private Hire Cars or Taxis; and

b) if so minded to licence electric vehicles as above, to amend Condition 14 for private hire cars to read:

“The vehicle must have an engine capacity with a “Power to Weight” ratio equal to or greater than 0.0690 hp per kg.”

Date 01 November 2016

Report Contact:

Name Alan Turpie Tel No 0131 271 3667

alan.turpie@midlothian.gov.uk

Background Papers: None