

Monday 16 October 2006  
at 6.00pm



# General Licensing Committee

**MEMBERS:** Councillor Mrs MURRAY (Chairman) Councillor BOWKER (Deputy Chairman), Councillors Mrs ANGEL, Mrs GOODALL, HARRIS, HERBERT, LACEY OBE, MARSH, Mrs POOLEY, Mrs SIMS, STEVENS, TAYLOR, TESTER, WALLIS and Miss WOODALL

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## 1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2006 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

## 2 Declaration of Interests.

Councillors Mrs Angel and Tester declared a prejudicial interest in item 3 and withdrew from the meeting.

## 3 Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles - Plates.

The Committee considered the report of the Licensing Manager regarding proposed changes to the rear and internal identification plates for both taxis and private hire vehicles. The revised form and content of the plates would improve visibility and provide the public with better information regarding the identification of licensed vehicles.

It was proposed that the plates be sourced and supplied internally to limit the opportunity for forgeries and for unlicensed vehicles to operate. Quotations would be sought from appropriate suppliers and the estimated cost per vehicle was £35 for set up and administration with an additional one off cost of £15 for the required fittings to display the plates.

Members of the trade had been consulted via the Taxi and Private Hire Forum and the proposal for larger, more visible plates at the rear and a smaller internal plate was supported.

Mr B Morris (Chairman, Eastbourne and Country) addressed the Committee in support of the new style rear plates to support passenger safety. The main concern was that the plate contained too much information. The inclusion of the vehicle registration and the vehicle type was considered unnecessary. Drivers would also incur additional cost whenever a vehicle was changed if the car registration was included. The plate number and the number of passengers permitted and whether a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle was sufficient and would enable the lettering to be clear and distinctive. He was unaware of any cases of forgery or theft of plates.

The Licensing Manager advised the Committee that the police were supportive of including the car registration number. A vehicle specific plate would prevent theft and its use on an unlicensed vehicle. She reported on an incident involving switched plates that was currently under investigation by the police and agreed to report back to the Committee on the outcome.

Mr C Islip (General Manager, Sussex Cars) addressed the Committee in support of the proposal which would make vehicles more easily identifiable. He queried the need for the inclusion of the car registration, particularly if a driver needed to use a different vehicle on a temporary basis. It was essential that a replacement plate could be provided quickly to ensure no loss of trade.

The Licensing Manager reported that a number of members of the licensing team would be trained on the equipment so there should be little delay in the issue of replacements.

Mock up plates were circulated at the meeting and the Committee discussed the design details. The view put forward by the trade that less information should appear on the revised plate was largely supported and that if the registration number was included, the make and model of the car was not required. With regard to the hologram which was currently placed over the plate number to prevent tampering, the Committee was advised that its location could be changed if the number was not clearly visible. Members supported the use of the Council crest rather than the logo.

The internal plate was required to be affixed securely in a place where it was visible at all times to passengers. As a suitable position for the placement of the sign would differ from vehicle to vehicle, an exact position had not been specified. Some Members felt that the car registration should also be included on the internal plate.

**RESOLVED: (1)** That the form of permanent internal and rear identification plates as submitted to the Committee be approved for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, subject to an amendment that the car make and model is not included on the rear plate.

**(2)** That the use of the Eastbourne Borough Council crest be approved as the preferred design for the plates.

**(3)** That in order to limit the opportunities for forgeries and/or unlicensed vehicles to operate, all rear and internal plates are sourced and supplied by the Council's Licensing Department.

The meeting closed at 7.09 p.m.

**Mrs A Murray  
Chairman**