

REPORT TO	ON
Licensing and Public Safety Committee	12 November 2019



TITLE	REPORT OF
Private Hire Livery	Interim Monitoring Officer

Is this report confidential?	No
------------------------------	----

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to create a more uniform and Identifiable fleet of South Ribble Borough Council private hire vehicles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.

- To consider the new proposed private hire signs and corporate signage.
- To agree that the licensing section undertake a consultation exercise with stakeholders on the proposed changes to the private hire signs, including the positioning of such signs (any such changes will require a change to the Private Hire Vehicle Conditions)
- To agree to receive a report on the outcome of the consultation exercise at a future meeting.

CORPORATE OUTCOMES

The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Excellence, Investment and Financial Sustainability	x
Health, Wellbeing and Safety	
Place, Homes and Environment	x

Projects relating to People in the Corporate Plan:

Our People and Communities	
----------------------------	--

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

3. This report will highlight two issues which are aimed to enable the authority to change to a more uniformed fleet of private hire vehicles that are easily recognisable by members of the public.

- New private hire vehicle signage/stickers and setting the positioning of the signs.
- To set the positioning of company logos on Private hire vehicles

Officers feel currently the public may find it hard to distinguish the difference between a hackney carriage and a private hire vehicle. Currently both Hackney Carriage vehicles and Private Hire vehicles are not limited to where they can place company signage and logos.

Section 48 of Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 states that;

“(1) Subject to the provisions of this Part of this Act, a district council may on the receipt of an application from the proprietor of any vehicle for the grant in respect of such vehicle of a Licence to use the vehicle as a private hire vehicle, grant in respect thereof a vehicle Licence:

Provided that a district council shall not grant such a Licence unless they are satisfied—

(a) That the vehicle is—

(ii) Not of such design and appearance as to lead any person to believe that the vehicle is a hackney carriage.”

The primary need for private hire vehicle council issued signage is to prevent/discourage touting and highlight to the public that should they enter a private hire vehicle without pre-booking they would not be insured for the journey.

Only hackney carriage vehicles can be hailed down at the side of the road or accept a booking that has not been pre booked (within its own licensed area).

Currently the private hire stickers distributed following the grant of a private hire vehicle licence to drivers to be placed on their private hire vehicles are too small and are not fit for purpose. They have very little information displayed and more importantly they do not state that if the vehicle is not pre booked then it is not insured. Please refer to appendix A of this report titled current private hire vehicle stickers.

Currently there is no defined position for the stickers to be placed on vehicles, this has led to an inconsistent approach to the location of the signs which can be found on windows, rear quarter panels or the doors. Consistency relating to the positioning is an important part of recognising the vehicle as Private Hire Vehicle and not a hackney Carriage Vehicle. Please see appendix B titled - Examples of Current Private Hire Vehicle Signage.

South Ribble BC licenced operators mostly have a mixed fleet of hackney and private hire vehicles. Both types of licenced vehicle carry the same company livery, except where the operator is required to change the word taxi to car. This makes it difficult for members of the public to distinguish if a vehicle parked up at the side of the road is in fact a hackney or a private hire vehicle.

An example of the similarities between a private hire vehicle and a hackney carriage vehicle and the difficulty for members of the public to distinguish between the two types of licence

vehicle from the same operator can be seen in Appendix D – Similarities between Hackney and Private Hire vehicles.

Drivers have in the past stated to officers when questioned about the placement of the signage that stickers are extremely difficult to remove once they have been placed on the vehicle and allege they have a tendency to damage the body work of the vehicle.

The representative from MOGO the provider of the council's livery (plates and stickers) was asked this question. He stated that they have never received a complaint or claim from drivers of any damage to the vehicles when removing the stickers and that they can be easily removed when a little heat is applied.

In February 2019 the council commissioned a review of its Taxi Licensing Policy by the LVSA (CTS Traffic and Transportation and Vector Transport Consultancy). The following comments were made in relation to the current Private Hire Signage;

“Private hire identification

During our review, the issue of how private hire vehicles were identified was noted as a potential safety concern. Various examples noted during the study of the application of the small sticker to vehicles, or not as the case may be, led to concern about this issue. Guidance on application of these stickers is minimal, but as already noted common application is to the rear of the rearmost door of vehicles.

As already noted, and as demonstrated by most vehicles observed, this leads the small sticker to become almost transparent to those seeing the vehicle. This means most private hire tend to be indistinguishable from private cars, which is a safety concern. Further, the location of the sticker does not help any potential user of the vehicle to know the vehicle they are entering is licensed, nor to be aware if entering without a booking that they may not be insured.

There are some private hire vehicles that exhibit names or phone numbers often on the driver door or on the rear of the vehicle. This does help a passenger who has booked identify they are being picked up by the correct company they have made their booking with. However, in some cases, these company logos can provide too much information, providing several different names or phone numbers which can reduce the ability of the customer to identify the vehicle clearly.

The level of variation within what is a relatively small public-facing private hire fleet needs regulation to help ensure the public can clearly identify a South Ribble licensed private hire vehicle and the company they have made a contract with readily. This should also seek to dissuade the small number of vehicles that do not have any clear identification from continuing to fail to be discernible by the travelling public.”

The report made the following recommendations on the basis of evidence gathered in the review, the following revisions should be considered:

“Ensure the public are clearly educated how to get licensed vehicles particularly that only hackney carriages can be hailed.

Enhance signing on private hire to ensure people can identify local private hire easily, ensuring they are also aware they can only engage them by booking.”

PROPOSALS (e.g. RATIONALE, DETAIL, FINANCIAL, PROCUREMENT)

4. The proposal is to change the wording within the Private Hire Vehicle Conditions within the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy to adopt the proposed changes and to adopt the revised Private hire signs attached to this report as appendix C entitled – Proposed Private Hire Vehicle Signage.

The new proposed signage will be of an increased size. The current signage measurements are 25cm x 10cm. The new proposed signage will measure 30cm x 20cm. This making the signage much more visible and prominent on the vehicle. The signs will still be made up of a self-adhesive sticker as previously required.

The current private hire condition states as follows:-

“22) A sign indicating the name and/or address and/or telephone number of the proprietor of the vehicle, such sign to be of a type and design to be approved by the Council in writing prior to application to the vehicle.

c) There shall be externally and directly affixed to a nearside and offside door a sign issued by the Councils Licensing unit relating to the use of the vehicle.”

The new Proposed Private Hire Vehicle Condition

22)

a) A sign indicating the name and/or address and/or telephone number of the proprietor of the vehicle may be attached to the front nearside and offside door only. Such sign to be no more than a size of 50cm x 50cm. The type and design to be approved by the Council in writing prior to application to the vehicle.

c) There shall be externally and directly affixed centrally to the rear nearside and offside door only a sign issued and approved by the Council's Licensing department relating to the use of the vehicle.”

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. The cost of the new signs can be funded from the existing budget for materials.

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

6. No further comments.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

7. The legal implications have been identified in the body of the report. If the committee is minded to approve the proposed changes then a consultation exercise will need to be carried out. The result of that exercise will be reported back to a future committee meeting.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

▶ Risk	A public safety concern is identified in the body of the report. The purpose of the proposed changes is to make the vehicles more readily identifiable as private hire vehicles.
▶ Equality & Diversity	No implications here

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS (or There are no background papers to this report)

There are no background papers to this report

APPENDICES (or There are no appendices to this report)

- Appendix A - Current Private Hire Vehicle Signage.
- Appendix B - Examples of Current Private Hire Vehicles.
- Appendix C - Proposed Private Hire Vehicle Signage.
- Appendix D – Similarities between Hackney and Private Hire Vehicles.

LT Member's Name
Job Title

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
Chris Ward, Licensing Officer	01772 625330	30/10/2019