

Agenda Item No: 4

Title: CHANGE OF LICENSING CONDITIONS FOR PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

Author: Murray Hardy (01799) 510598

Summary

- 1 This report recommends that the Private Hire Vehicle Licence conditions be amended to allow left hand drive stretch limousines to be licensed by this Council.

Background

- 2 In recent years there has been an increase in the number of stretch limousines being used for the conveyance of passengers for normal hire or reward operations. Previously these vehicles were used almost exclusively for weddings or funerals.
- 3 Local Councils have in the main been unable to control these vehicles as most stretch limousines can carry more than eight passengers. Therefore they do not come within the scope of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. The responsibility for licensing these vehicles would fall within the jurisdiction of the relevant Area Traffic Commissioner.
- 4 However, stretch limousines that can carry less than 9 passengers and are being used for hire or reward do fall within the jurisdiction of the local authority and could be licensed accordingly.
- 5 As the use of these 'smaller' type of limousine is increasing it is necessary for each local authority to act to ensure the safety of their travelling public. Unfortunately all of this type of vehicle are imported direct from the United States and are therefore constructed only as left hand drive vehicles.
- 6 Currently the Uttlesford Private Hire Vehicle conditions prevent any operator from using any left hand drive vehicle. Therefore enforcement action would be necessary if any company were to use this type of stretch limousine.
- 7 Consultation with other authorities within Essex reveal that Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend and Tending do licence stretch limousines. Basildon and Colchester are currently in the process of amending their conditions.
- 8 In line with other local authorities in Essex, it is thought appropriate that any relaxation on the use of left hand drive vehicles should be restricted to these limousines specially constructed and with an extended wheelbase to accommodate up to eight passengers. It is unlikely that this change to the licensing conditions will encourage much wider use of stretches limousines as the hiring's are mainly for corporate use, sporting events, theatre trips and hotel groups etc.

- 9 The DSO Manager and Licensing Enforcement Officer have recently inspected such a vehicle and confirm that the facilities at our Great Dunmow workshops are suitable for annual (bi-annual for vehicles over 5 years old) safety and maintenance inspections.
- 10 The drivers of this type of vehicle would need to hold a Private Hire Drivers Licence and indeed the operator would also need to be licensed. Standard criteria and scrutiny would apply to all such applications.
- 11 Currently one potential operator has made an approach to this Council and has been advised of this report to Members.

RECOMMENDED that this Council's Private Hire Vehicle Licence conditions be amended to allow for the use of this type of left hand drive vehicle only.

Background Papers: None.