

Committee: LICENSING

Agenda Item

Date: March 10, 2010

5

**Title: VEHICLE TYPES FOR PRIVATE HIRE
VEHICLES**

**Author: Michael Perry, Assistant Chief Executive,
01799 510416** Item for decision

Summary

1. This report is to inform members of an approach received by the council to licence a type of vehicle which does not currently meet the council's specifications.

Recommendations

2. That members determine whether to vary the licensing conditions to permit the licensing of one passenger vehicles.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.
 - Submission made in support of the application.
 - Email responses from other authorities regarding their licensing policies

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	None.
Community Safety	The vehicles concerned have achieved the NCAP4 level of safety approval.
Equalities	An equalities impact assessment has been carried out and is attached.
Finance	If approved there will be a small increase in the fleet of vehicles licensed by the council which will bring a marginal financial benefit.
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights	None.

Legal implications	None.
Sustainability	The vehicle concerned is fuel efficient achieving 80.7 mpg in the urban cycle and 85.6 mpg in the extra urban cycle. Carbon dioxide emissions are 89 grams per kilometre which is group A and exempt from road tax duty.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	None.

Situation

5. The council has received an approach to amend its licensing conditions to permit the licensing of Smart Cars as private hire vehicles.
6. The Government's guidance regarding the specification for vehicle types that may be licensed states "the legislation gives local authorities a wide range of discretion over the types of vehicle that they can licence as taxis or private hire vehicles. ...normally the best practice is for local licensing authorities to adopt the principle of specifying as many different types of vehicle as possible. Indeed local authorities might usefully set down a range of general criteria, leaving it open to the taxi and PHV trades to put forward vehicles of their own choice which can be shown to meet those criteria. In that way there can be flexibility for new vehicle types to be readily taken into account."
7. Although Smart Cars appear small, the applicant states that high levels of passenger comfort are found inside and that there is a generous amount of space in terms of head and leg room. The vehicle has wide doors and high supportive seats suitable for those who are less agile. They are approved for use as mobility vehicles. There is a 340 litres of luggage space, sufficient for a large suitcase or trolley of shopping. The vehicle will comfortably take a standard wheelchair as luggage and there is sufficient room for an assistance dog.
8. Enquiries have been made of other authorities as to their policy on licensing Smart Cars. Whilst the majority of responders do not licence such vehicles at present the applicant has provided evidence that they are licensed in South Oxford and Cornwall. They are also licensed by Arun District Council and the Public Carriage Office (Transport for London).
9. The applicant has carried out some research which suggests that between 60-82% (depending upon time and day) of journeys were single person trips. The average journeys are 20 minutes of up to 10 miles, slightly longer in rural areas. Where there is only one passenger

requiring a vehicle a Smart Car would be more fuel and carbon dioxide efficient.

10. If members approve the request the applicant wishes to trade under the title of “cab4one.me”. This would pose a difficulty as the council’s licensing conditions do not permit private hire vehicles to be termed ‘cabs’. Members could if they wish remove this condition or the applicant could be encouraged to choose another trade name e.g. car4one.me.

Risk Analysis

11.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Those requiring transport for more than one person would be unable to use the service.	4, the vehicle is only designed to take one passenger and additional passengers would not be permitted.	1, there is an extensive fleet of multi-seater private hire vehicles within the district.	The committee should stress to the applicant that if such vehicles are licensed the service is to be promoted on the basis of a one passenger service only.

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

