

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution or Information**

Report to: Licensing and Appeals Committee - 29 September 2014

Subject: Consultation relating to a request from the taxi trade to fit mandatory Vehicle Identification Light Boxes into Hackney Carriage vehicles.

Report of: Head of Planning, Licensing and Building Control

Summary

This report advises the Committee of a request by a hackney carriage trade representative to fit all hackney carriage vehicles with a 'Vehicle Identification Light Box', a photo of which is attached to the report at **Appendix 2**

The report recommends that prior to consideration of this request a twelve week consultation period with the hackney carriage trade and the public should take place.

It is proposed that the consultation takes the form of two questionnaires (Public and Hackney Carriage Trade) (attached at **Appendix 1**)

Although the proposed consultation incorporates questions in respect of hackney carriage vehicle advertisement and livery, this report primarily deals with the issue of Vehicle Identification Light Boxes (VILB). The report provides reasons for using the wider consultation questionnaire as oppose to undertaking two distinct consultations on livery/ advertising and VILB.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee agree a twelve week consultation period commencing on 6 October 2014 and finishing on 29 December 2014 with the public and hackney carriage trade in relation to the mandatory fitting of a 'vehicle identification light box' in all hackney carriage vehicles.
2. That the questionnaires (attached at **Appendix 1**) are used for the consultation.
3. That following the twelve week consultation period a further report, which includes the consultation responses, is brought before the Licensing and Appeals Committee on 9 February 2015.

Wards Affected: All

Community Strategy Spine	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
Performance of the economy of the region and sub region	Not applicable to content this report
Reaching full potential in education and employment	Not applicable to the content of this report
Individual and collective self esteem – mutual respect	Not applicable to the content of this report
Neighbourhoods of Choice	Not applicable to the content of this report

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None- The Vehicle Identification Light Box would be fitted to the hackney carriage vehicle prior to it being presented for testing. At this stage it is envisaged that the light box would be paid for by hackney carriage proprietors, although officers will explore

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background documents

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At a trade representative liaison meeting in 2009 the taxi trade first raised the idea of a vehicle identification light box (VILB), to be fitted in all hackney carriage vehicles'. The VILB is a perspex box that is capable of being illuminated and shows the unique vehicle licence number. A picture of the 'vehicle identification light box' is attached to the report at **Appendix 2**. This was overtaken by other matters, although it was always intended that the request would be given further consideration
- 1.2 On 4 September 2013 a formal request was made by Mr Paul McCormick, a trade representative, formally for the Airport Taxi Association and more recently for Mantax Radio Base, that all hackney carriage vehicles to be fitted with a 'vehicle identification light box (VILB).
- 1.3 At its meeting of 17 February 2014, the Committee, considered the issue of advertising and livery on hackney carriage vehicles and agreed that a further public consultation in relation to vehicle livery and advertisements should be prepared and that a sub group of the Committee should meet to consider appropriate questions to be included in any future consultation document. The Committee also agreed that any further action should be held in abeyance until the publication of the Law Commission recommendations.
 - 1.3.1 On 26 February 2014 a sub group of the Licensing and Appeals Committee was convened to formulate a consultation questionnaire relating to the issue of vehicle livery and advertisements. The sub group prepared two questionnaires one to be used for the public and the other to be used for the hackney carriage trade.
 - 1.3.2 The questionnaires attached at Appendix 1 comprise the questions previously devised by the sub group, as outlined in 1.3.1, and additional questions, devised by officers, relating to the VILB
 - 1.3.3 The additional questions were included by Officers, following discussions with the, then, Chair of this Committee to treat the request for a mandatory VILB as part of the review of vehicle livery and 'advertisements in and on hackney carriage vehicles'.
- 1.4 Following a further request from the trade, at a recent trade liaison meeting, a decision was taken to move forward with the request for a mandatory 'VILB' to be fitted in all hackney carriage vehicles and to bring this to Members attention for consideration.
- 1.5 It is normal practise for a consultation to be undertaken prior to consideration by the Committee of a matter affecting a Council Policy or conditions attached to a hackney carriage vehicle proprietor licence.

2. Background

- 2.1 The function of the Council in licensing hackney carriage drivers and vehicles is one of public safety. As hackney carriage vehicles in Manchester are all vehicles of a prescribed type, and therefore of fairly uniform appearance, it is important for travelling passengers to be in a position to easily identify the vehicle should the need arise for example if the passenger should wish to make a complaint.
- 2.1.1 At present a vehicle can be identified by its licence number, which is scribed on plates fixed to the front and rear of the vehicle.
- 2.2. By way of improving passenger safety, representatives of the hackney carriage trade have requested the mandatory introduction of a 'VILB', which would be fitted inside every hackney carriage vehicle. The cost of the unit is currently £30 plus vat for supply and around £15 plus vat for fitting (the unit can be easily fitted by most garages)
- 2.2.1 At this stage it is envisaged that the cost of the light box will be funded by hackney carriage vehicle proprietors, however officers will explore if any other realistic options are available. This information will be included within the report back to this Committee on 9 February 2015.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 It is best practise for a consultation period to last for 12 weeks. As the consultation includes the wider remit of the 'vehicle livery and advertisements in and on hackney carriage vehicles it is proposed that the full consultation period is utilised.
- 3.2. For reasons of efficiency, it is proposed that a single consultation be undertaken incorporating advertising/livery and VILB, utilising the proposed questionnaires, attached at Appendix 1,
- 3.2.3 Any responses received in relation to vehicle livery/advertisements will be collated and retained for future consideration by the Licensing and Appeals Committee. Any consideration of this matter will form part of the review of Council Policy, conditions etc in light of the Law Commission recommendations for the wholesale reform of Taxi and Private Hire Services
- 3.3 The consultation will take the form of two on-line questionnaires. An e-mail will be sent to hackney carriage vehicle proprietors and drivers advising them of the consultation. The licensing unit has a data base of some 2,500 hackney carriage drivers and 700 vehicle proprietors, which will be used for this purpose. Members of the public will be informed of the consultation via Council media.

4.0 Other legal implications

4.1 There are no other legal implications to consider.

5.0 Contributing to the Community Strategy

5.1 **(a) Performance of the economy of the region and sub region**

5.2 **(b) Reaching full potential in education and employment**

5.3 **(c) Individual and collective self-esteem – mutual respect**

5.4 **(d) Neighbourhoods of Choice**

6. Key Policies and Considerations

(a) Equal Opportunities

(b) Risk Management

(c) Legal Considerations

7. Conclusion

7.1 The report details the request by the hackney carriage trade for a mandatory Vehicle Identification Light Box (VILB) to be fitted to all hackney carriage vehicles. A photo of the light box is attached to the report at **Appendix 2**.

7.2 The report advises that prior to any consideration by the Committee it is the practice for a proposed a twelve week consultation with the public and hackney carriage trade to take place. The report proposes the use of the two consultation questionnaires (trade and public, attached at Appendix 1), comprising of the questions previously devised by a sub group of this committee dealing with the issue of vehicle livery and advertisements and the additional questions relating to the VILB

7.2 The report recommends the Committee agree a twelve week on-line consultation commencing on 6 October 2014 and finishing on 29 December 2014 with the public and hackney carriage trade utilising the questionnaires attached at Appendix 1, and that following the consultation a further report should be brought back before the Committee on 9 February 2015 for consideration.