



East Northamptonshire Council

Policy and Resources Committee - 13 July 2009

Discreet Taxi Plate Policy for Private Hire Vehicles - Review

Summary

This report deals with the review of the discreet plate policy, and proposes revisions, at the request of the Private Hire Vehicle trade, to address recent changes in legislation

Attachment(s)

Appendix One - Discreet Plate Policy for Private Hire Vehicles

1.0 Introduction

1.1 East Northamptonshire Council adopted a Discrete Plate Policy for Private Hire Vehicles in March 2008 (minute 363(a) – 17 March 2008). This policy was to be reviewed after its first year of operation and as such it has been revised slightly.

2.0 Report

2.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 allows private hire vehicles to ask for the requirement to display an external plate on their vehicle to be removed. The policy has been popular in that 9 vehicles have applied for a discreet plate. We have received positive feedback from the trade about this process.

2.2 The only change required to the policy is the removal of the approved list for vehicles.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 The requirement by the trade and changes to the legislation require a Discreet Plate Policy to be developed to guide Officers and Members in making decisions about the removal of the requirement for a private hire vehicle to display external plates.

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that approval be given to the revised Discreet Plate Policy.

Implications

Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy

Good Quality of Life	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good Reputation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good Value for Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	High Quality Service Delivery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effective Partnership Working	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strong Community Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge of our Customers and Communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours			<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:			<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval			<input type="checkbox"/>

Financial	There are no financial implications at this stage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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- There will be financial implications – see paragraph
- There is provision within existing budget
- Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date
- Decisions may have potential for income generation

- Risk Management** An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks
- Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference -

- Staff** There are no additional staffing implications
- Additional staff will be required – see paragraph

- Equalities and Human Rights** There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications
- There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph

- Legal** Power: Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Road Safety Act 2006
- Other considerations:

Background Papers: None

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Date: 26 June 2009

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(Committee Report Normal Rev. 15)



**East Northamptonshire Council
Environmental Services**

**Discreet Plate Policy for Private Hire Vehicles
June 2009**

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Change History

Issue	Date	Comments
1.0	7 January 2008	First Draft
2.0	10 January 2008	Second Draft
3.0	18 January 2008	Third Draft after Trade comments
4.0	17 March 2008	Final
5.0	2 June 2009	Revision

NB: Draft versions 0.1 - final published versions 1.0

Consultees

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Commercial Health	Taxi Licensing Group
	Northamptonshire Local Authorities

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Diane Baish	
Mike Deacon	

Links to other documents

Document	Link
Private Hire Vehicle Conditions	
Licensing Enforcement policy	

Additional Comments to note

Necessary due to new legislation and demand from private hire vehicle trade.

Contents		Page
	Executive summary	5
1.0	Introduction	6
2.0	Statement of intent	6
3.0	Scope	6
4.0	Aim and objectives	8
5.0	Monitoring and reviewing progress	8
Appendices:		
	Appendix 1 – Exemption certificate	9
	Appendix 2 – Discreet Plate	10

Executive summary

The aim of licensing private hire vehicles is to protect the public. The local provision of private hire service plays an important part in the local transport provision. It is recognised that if licensing requirements are unduly stringent they will restrict the supply of Private Hire Vehicle services. Therefore the licensing requirements are set in proportion to the risks they aim to address.

There has been a change in the market relating to private hire vehicles in recent years with limousines and executive car hire becoming a more popular means of travel. This coupled with changes in the legislation has led to the trade wanting a more discreet plate for executive hire vehicles particularly if they are chauffeuring people where security issues exist.

As a result of the trade requesting a discreet plate for executive hire and the change in legislation the council needs to ensure the public are safe and know when they are getting into a licensed vehicle. This policy has been developed to allow private hire vehicles that meet a strict criteria to display discreet plates.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is to allow consistent application of the provision of discreet plates for private hire vehicles.
- 1.2 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 requires that private hire vehicles display a licence plate and drivers wear a driver's badge. The same legislation also allows a Licensing Authority to exempt the display of vehicle licence plates and, where that exemption applies, the requirement to wear a private hire driver's badge.
- 1.3 The open display of the vehicle plates and badges is important in terms of protecting both the public and the taxi trade. However, there are limited occasions when their display may have the opposite effect both in terms of customer safety and commercial implications for the operating business, such as the operation of chauffeured, executive and limousine vehicles. Identification of the vehicle as a licensed vehicle may allow "high risk" passengers to be more readily targeted putting both them and the driver at risk. The display of Local Authority licence plates externally may also deter some customers from using the service

2.0 Statement of intent

- 2.1 It is not intended that all private hire vehicle should have access to the discreet plate policy, only those operating the type of service that meet the criteria detailed in the scope below.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 Discreet plates will be considered where the following requirements are met:
- a) Vehicles accepted include luxury brands such as Mercedes Benz, BMW, Jaguar, Rolls Royce, Bentley and Lexus. The highest specification executive type cars from other manufacturers may also be considered. American style stretched vehicles will normally qualify for Discreet plates.
 - b) The vehicle will be in immaculate condition with no visible defects, dents or blemishes to the external bodywork or internal trim.
 - c) Drivers pass the East Northamptonshire Practical Test for driving a vehicle without external plates.
 - d) The type of work undertaken is 'executive' in nature. This would mean that the vehicle is used specifically for special events such as birthdays or by the type of clients that for security reasons would not want the vehicle to be identifiable.
- 3.2 Applications for exemption will be made to the Licensing Authority in writing by a person holding a private hire operator's licence issued by the Licensing Authority. The application must be accompanied by documentation to evidence compliance with point 3 a) and 3 d).

3.3 Provided that conditions 3a) and d) are satisfactorily met, an appropriate appointment will be made to inspect the vehicle to satisfy the requirement of section 3 b) and to undertake the test at 3 c).

3.4 If all points above are satisfied discreet plates will be issued.

3.5 If all points are not satisfied, application will be refused and private hire plates will be utilised. In the event of an applicant being dissatisfied with this decision, written application may be made for a review of the decision by the Licensing Panel.

3.6 If Discreet plates are issued the following additional conditions will be added to the private hire vehicle licence:-

- a) When operating under the discreet plate policy the windscreen badge issued by the Licensing Authority will be displayed at the nearside of the front windscreen at all times.
- b) The Exemption Notice issued by the Licensing Authority in respect of the licensed private hire vehicle will be carried in the vehicle at all times and will be produced upon request to an authorised officer of the Licensing Authority or any Police Officer.
- c) Other than the windscreen badge, the proprietor will not display in, on or from the vehicle any advertisement, signage, logos or insignia advertising the operating company or the vehicle's status as a private hire vehicle.
- d) When issued with an exemption notice, the vehicle will not be required to display any other signs which the Licensing Authority may at any time require private hire vehicles to display.
- e) If a taximeter is installed within the vehicle and is used to calculate the fare, it shall be installed in such a manner that it is concealed from normal view.
- f) A table of fares/tariffs will not be displayed in the vehicle.
- g) During the period of the exemption notice, the driver shall not wear the private hire driver's badge but will have it available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Local Authority or any Police Officer on request.
- h) At all times during the period of the exemption notice the driver of the vehicle will be appropriately dressed in either a formal chauffeur's uniform or a business suit with collar and tie.
- i) The driver and passenger front side window glass and the front windscreen must be clear. However, tinted windows can be fitted to the side and rear window glass of the vehicle.

4.0 Aim and objectives

- 4.1 The aim of this policy is to protect the public, whilst taking a balanced approach to licensing requirements.
- 4.2 The objective of this policy is the provision of a discreet plate to allow executive vehicles to operate without displaying external plates.

5.0 Monitoring and reviewing progress

- 5.1 The implementation of this policy will be reviewed at three and six months to identify any concerns or necessary alternations
- 5.2 The policy will be reviewed in its entirety in January 2011 to ensure it still reflects current practice.
- 5.3 The Authorised Officer of the Licensing Authority will monitor Private Hire Vehicles compliance with this policy and take action in accordance with the licensing enforcement policy.

Appendix One

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976

SECTION 75(3) NOTICE

EXEMPTION FROM DISPLAYING PLATES ON PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE

PROPRIETOR:

PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENCE NUMBER:

NOTICE COMMENCEMENT DATE:

NOTICE EXPIRY DATE:

VEHICLE MAKE & MODEL:

VEHICLE REGISTRATION NUMBER:

Having met the requirements laid down in the Policy relating to exemption from displaying private hire vehicle licence plates as permitted in the above legislation, East Northamptonshire Council as Licensing Authority exempts the holder of this notice from the requirement to display private hire vehicle plates during the period of this notice on the licensed private hire vehicle detailed above.

As required by the legislation, the driver of the above vehicle is also exempted from displaying the private hire driver's identification badge.

This notice will only apply provided that the Discreet plates are displayed and the conditions detailed on the back of this notice are complied with. Failure to comply with said conditions may result in legal action and revocation of the notice.

This notice and the private hire driver's identification badge will be available for examination on request by an authorised officer of the Licensing Authority or any Police Officer.

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HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Appendix Two – Discreet Plate

