

LICENSING REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Report on the Vehicle Checks carried out to Licensed Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicles on 14th and 15th June 2017 13th July 2017

Report of Food, Safety and Licensing Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Committee of the outcome from the recent unannounced checks carried out jointly with Licensing Officers and VOSA on licensed hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested to note the outcome from the recent unannounced inspections of licensed vehicles carried out on the 14th and 15th June 2017 and the potential action arising in respect of the use of in car fire extinguishers and appropriate specification.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The undertaking of roadside vehicle compliance and safety checks on licensed hackney carriage and private hire vehicles is conducted from time to time, usually as a joint initiative with other agencies, such as VOSA. The purpose of the checks is to determine whether the vehicle complies with the Council's standards for licensed vehicles and to assess road worthiness.
- 1.2 On previous occasions over recent years, the practice has been conducted with the issue of a notice period to all licensed drivers and operators that the inspections are due to be carried out, providing the date and time for the inspections.
- 1.3 For the checks conducted on the 14th and 15th June 2017, it was decided that no notice period would be given and therefore all vehicle inspections were carried out unannounced.

2.0 Purpose and extent of the vehicle checks

- 2.1 The operation was conducted in partnership with VOSA and working closely with the Lancashire Police. The drivers of the vehicles were instructed on the day by Police officers and via Taxi operators to attend the inspections carried out on the rear carpark of the Salt Ayre leisure centre.
- 2.2 The Licensing officers carried out checks to assess compliance with the appropriate Council standards for licensed vehicles whilst the VOSA inspectors focused on the roadworthiness of vehicles.
- 2.3 All vehicles that were either not operating on the day or did not get pulled in due to time constraints on officers, or were not found on the day, are to be followed up in the coming weeks.

3.0 Summary outcome

- 3.1 The table below provides a summary of the main outcome from the operation.

Summary inspection results

- 176 individual vehicle inspections were carried out;
- 62 hackney carriages and 114 private hire vehicles checked (176 in total);
- Licensing staff issued 75 defect notices & 2 suspension notices;
- VOSA issued 5 prohibition notices;
- Defects ranged from minor e.g. vehicle cleanliness, to serious e.g. bald tyres;
- The operation identified some problems with the type of fire extinguishers carried.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 Licensing officers and VOSA felt that the lack of prior notice given resulted in a far higher number of defects detected and hence the increased number of defect notices issued compared to the last time the operation was conducted (32 defect notices issued in a comparable operation conducted in September 2015).
- 4.2 The outcome suggests significant benefits from conducting unannounced inspections, and contrary to what may have been expected, significant complaints were not received from licensed drivers or operators. In fact some comments were received from drivers that the action was welcomed, albeit the inspections did disrupt business for a short time. It was felt that had notice been given, the more serious defects such as bald tyres, would not have been found.
- 4.3 VOSA has identified an issue relating to the type of fire extinguishers found in some of the vehicles which are considered unsuitable to be used in a confined space, such as a vehicle where passengers may still be inside. The advice from VOSA is that dry powder extinguishers may lead to asphyxiation if used within the vehicle and they recommend the use of water or foam extinguishers. The current rule and conditions in force do not specify the type of extinguisher to be provided. Clarification is awaited

from VOSA regarding this matter and it may be necessary to vary the conditions accordingly. When VOSA confirm their recommendation, it is proposed to inform all licensed drivers and operators of the advice immediately and present the Committee with further details together with a recommendation to vary our standard conditions as necessary.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial Services have been consulted and there are no financial implications

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated in the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Mr Stephen Sylvester

Telephone: 01524 582717

E-mail: ssylvester@lancaster.gov.uk

Ref: SS/July17