

The Licensing Sub-Committee of the Regulatory Committee

1.30pm Wednesday 30 January 2013

Application for Variation of Private Hire Car Licence – Exemption from “Pre-booked Hires Only” Door Stickers

Item number	3.1
Report number	
Wards	Citywide

Links

Coalition pledges	P15 & P30
Council outcomes	C08
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

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Executive summary

Application for Variation of Private Hire Car Licence – Exemption from “Pre-Booked Hires Only” Door Stickers

Summary

The Committee is asked to consider a request by a private hire car licence holder that his licence conditions be varied so that he does not have to fit the “Pre-booked Hires Only” stickers on the front doors of his private hire car.

Recommendations

1. After hearing from the applicant, the Committee should decide whether it wishes to vary the relevant licence to allow exemption.
2. If minded to grant the exemption the committee is recommended to attach to the exemption the conditions detailed in paragraphs a) and b) of 2.3 below.

Measures of success

Not applicable.

Financial impact

The costs of applications for variation of private hire car licences are met entirely from relevant application fee.

Equalities impact

None.

Sustainability impact

None.

Consultation and engagement

Not Applicable.

Background reading / external references

None.

Application for Variation of Private Hire Car licence – Exemption from “Pre-booked Hires Only” Door Stickers

1. Background

- 1.1 On 22 May 2009, the Regulatory Committee approved a requirement that all private hire cars would have to carry self adhesive plastic oval signs on their front doors stating “Pre-booked Hires Only”.
- 1.2 On 27 January 2011, the Regulatory Committee approved a Guidance Note for use by the Licensing Sub-Committee when considering requests for exemption from this requirement. A copy of this guidance is attached in [Appendix 1](#).
- 1.3 The Sub-committee has granted exemption in three previous cases. These applicants were granted exemption as they established that they carried out a greater amount of specialised high quality executive/tourism work throughout Scotland. One applicant said that 70% of his work came from this source than general private hire car work. Both applicant provided letters from a number of hotels who confirmed that they would not use the private hire car vehicle if the door stickers were attached.
- 1.4 Another applicant, who stated that 30% of business was executive or wedding hires was refused a variation. The applicant appealed against refusal of his request for exemption. The Sheriff considered that the Sub-committee had not acted unreasonably when refusing his request and refused the appeal.

2. Main report

- 2.1 A request for variation of licence has been received from Jamie Brown. Details of the application and supporting documents provided by him are attached in [Appendix 2](#).
- 2.2 The applicant has been invited to attend the committee.
- 2.3 Each application should be considered on its own merits notwithstanding the general policy adopted by the Regulatory Committee. If the Committee is minded to allow exemption, it the following conditions would normally apply.

- (a) the exemption would only apply to that particular vehicle whilst it is licensed by that operator and that, if the vehicle is replaced, the exemption would no longer apply, their next vehicle would have to bear the sticker (although they could apply for an exemption for that vehicle if they wish); and
- (b) The rear licence plate would carry the wording “Door Sticker Exemption”.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 After hearing from the applicant, the Committee should decide whether it wishes to vary the relevant licence to allow exemption.
- 3.2 If minded to grant the exemption the committee is recommended to attach to the exemption the conditions detailed in paragraphs a) and b) of 2.3 above.

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Links

Coalition pledges	P15 - Work with public organisations, the private sector and social enterprises to promote Edinburgh to investors. P30 – continue to maintain a sound financial position including long-term financial planning.
Council outcomes	CO8 - Edinburgh’s economy creates and sustains job opportunities.
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 - Edinburgh’s economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all.
Appendices	<u>Appendix 1</u> Guidance from Regulatory Committee. <u>Appendix 2</u> Details of Jamie Brown’s Application.

Appendix 1

Regulatory Committee Guidance/Policy Note

“Pre-booked Hires Only” Door Stickers on Private Hire Cars.

1. Private Hire Car “Pre-booked Hires Only” door stickers have been carried by the vast majority of private hire cars in Edinburgh since November 2009.
2. The stickers are important as they remind drivers and the public that these vehicles can only be pre-booked. They also assist the public in identifying genuine licensed private hire cars and reduce the risk of their getting into unlicensed vehicles.
3. The carrying of stickers is a reasonable condition of licence and failure to carry them is (1) a criminal offence and (2) a matter that could lead to suspension or removal of the operator’s licence.
4. Door stickers of a similar type are in use throughout many parts of the UK. Very few complaints have been received from operators in Edinburgh about the fitting or removal of the stickers.
5. The stickers were designed on the basis that they would not be removed from the vehicle on a regular basis. Removal of the sticker destroys a holographic mark on the sticker, thereby minimising the risk of stickers being stolen or placed on unlicensed vehicles.
6. If a licenceholder with the door sticker condition already on his licence wishes to seek exemption from carrying the stickers, he would have to make an application for variation of his licence. A person applying for the grant of a new licence or applying for renewal of their licence can ask that the sticker requirement should not apply to their licence.
7. In dealing with the foregoing matters, the following guidance is provided –
 - (a) Notwithstanding the terms of this Guidance/Policy Note, the Committee has to consider each situation on its own merits and circumstances.
 - (b) The stickers perform an important function and there should be a presumption that they will be fitted.
 - (c) If the sticker is already on a licensed vehicle already, there should be a presumption that they remain on the vehicle.
 - (d) A licensed private hire car is always a licensed vehicle and the door sticker should remain on the vehicle at all times. There should therefore be no need to remove a sticker when the vehicle is not being used as a private hire car.
 - (e) It appears that a private hire car can be driven by a person who is not a licensed taxi or private hire car driver, provided the vehicle is not being used to carry fare paying passengers and appropriate insurance is in place. If the vehicle is being driven by a licensed driver or unlicensed

driver for social or personal use, it is recommended that the vehicle should still carry the pre-booked hire door sticker at all times.

- (f) Operators should make suitable insurance and practical parking/garaging arrangements to minimise damage to their vehicle when left unattended and temporary removal of the stickers should not be required.
- (g) Non standard or magnetic door stickers should not be permitted. They could be easily removed, applied to unlicensed vehicles and/or cause a road safety hazard.
- (h) When considering requests for exemptions from operators who use vehicles for occasional weddings/funerals, the Committee should have regard to whether the vehicle is of a special type, design and condition that is normally associated with wedding/funeral use. Any operators who wish to use vehicles only for funerals or weddings have the option to operate without a private hire car licence under the exemption provided by S22(b) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. Operators wishing to purchase expensive speciality vehicles for wedding use may have to consider using such a vehicle for weddings and operating another vehicle as a licensed private hire car for day to day use.
- (i) Requests for exemption on the suggestion that they are used for special “executive hire” should not generally be allowed, as it is considered that the stickers do not detract from the appearance of the vehicle to any material extent. Any operators who wish to use vehicles for special executive hire have the option to operate without a private hire car licence under the exemption provided by S22(c) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. This relates to vehicles which are exclusively hired under one contract for their exclusive hire for a period not less than 24 hours.
- (j) Requests for exemption on the grounds that the placing of the stickers would invalidate or affect their bodywork/paintwork warranty should not be generally permitted. The operators should have taken this into account before they purchased the vehicle for use as a private hire car and/or they should have sought exemption before the condition was introduced in October 2009. They would therefore be regarded as having acquiesced to the fitting of the stickers as they did not formally object to the imposition of the sticker requirement.
- (k) Special circumstances have be considered for the small number of persons who did not agree to the condition being placed on their licence last October if they suggest that their bodywork/paintwork may be invalidated or affected by fitting of the stickers. These operators may have to be distinguished as they purchased their vehicles and made their financial calculations without the knowledge that the stickers would be applied.
 - (1) Operators in this small group should be required to provide evidence as to when they purchased and licensed their vehicle as a private hire car and the relevant bodywork/paintwork guarantee/warranty documentation;

- (2) If it can be shown by the operator that the imposition of the sticker requirement may invalidate his warranty, it is suggested that the Committee may wish to allow exemption for that vehicle for such time as it remains licensed by that operator;
 - (3) If it can be established that the operator has possibly invalidated his warranty by other actions, e.g. possibly carrying magnetic door stickers, the Committee may not wish to grant exemption;
 - (4) Some of the persons in this small group have purchased new vehicles since 7 October 2009. It is suggested that these operators should not be granted exemption as they were aware of the likely requirement to carry the stickers.
- (l) If the Committee is minded to allow exemption, it may wish to require that;
- (a) the exemption would only apply to that particular vehicle whilst it is licensed by that operator and that, if the vehicle is replaced, the exemption would no longer apply, their next vehicle would have to bear the sticker (although they could apply for an exemption for that vehicle if they wish); and
 - (b) the rear licence plate would carry the wording "Door Sticker Exemption".