

To: GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE		Subject: RATIONALISATION OF TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING SYSTEMS - VEHICLE SPECIFICATIONS FOR TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES.
From: HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES		
Date: 29 July 1996	Ref: WBK/MRP	

1 **INTRODUCTION**

In terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act, a licensing authority may make it a condition of a licence that the vehicle to which it relates is of a particular type size or design. The four former authorities all imposed conditions as to the type of vehicles which could operate as either a taxi or a private hire vehicle. The purpose of this report is to outline the major areas of difference, the requirement for rationalisation and possible considerations before a final decision is reached.

2 ***Taxis***

Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and Strathkelvin both required all taxis to be of the black hackney variety, i.e. either metro cab or FX4. Monklands and Motherwell were less restrictive, but required taxis to be of at least four doors and in Motherwell with an engine capacity of at least 1700cc and in Monklands 1600cc. Motherwell would not allow estates or hatchbacks, whilst Monklands only prohibited estates. Monklands also required their taxis to be all black. Each authority also provided a plate to be fixed at the rear of the vehicle and Monklands and Motherwell both required that an approved taxi sign be fixed securely to the roof.

3 ***Private Hire Vehicles***

The specifications of the former authorities, in so far as they related to private hire vehicles were relatively similar. All required the vehicle to have four doors, with a minimum engine capacity ranging from 1300cc in Strathkelvin to 1750cc in Motherwell. Motherwell prohibited estates and hatchbacks whilst the other authorities only prohibited estates. All the authorities issued a plate to be affixed to the car identifying it as a private hire vehicle. In addition, Strathkelvin District Council required stickers to be placed in the windows identifying the car as a private hire vehicle.

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There is now a desire to have a uniform specification throughout the North Lanarkshire area. In the provision of taxi and private hire services there is a requirement that the vehicles used are of such a specification as to provide a safe, reliable and comfortable service. Also taxi vehicles (unless exempted) will be subject to the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which will lay down regulations to allow better access for the disabled. Such requirements however need to be balanced against the costs to the operator of providing a vehicle of an unnecessarily high specification. Any changes to the specification of vehicles which would have cost considerations for elements of the trade would, subject to the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, require to be phased and it is suggested that 3 years would be sufficient for any major changes.

Recommendation

Further consideration be undertaken in consultation with the trade and the chief constable and to report back to the Committee with recommendations.

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Head of Legal Services