

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee

Date **04 September 2023**

Report of: **Head of Environmental Health**

Subject: **Review of CCTV in Taxi/Private Hire Vehicles**

SUMMARY

In July 2020 the Department for Transport published a document entitled “Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards. These standards include a requirement to keep under regular review whether to mandate closed circuit television (CCTV) in Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles. The Committee considered this matter in July 2022 and did not mandate CCTV at that time. However there has been a recent conviction of a taxi driver in Southampton for a serious sexual assault, in which CCTV in the taxi played a major part in securing that conviction. The purpose of this report is for the Committee to review the earlier decision regarding CCTV as required by the Statutory Guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee consider the following amendments to the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Conditions of Licensing: -

- (a) that Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles plated for the first time are required to be fitted with an approved CCTV system;
- (b) that existing Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles be required to be fitted with an approved CCTV system by 1 April 2025; and
- (c) that the Head of Environmental Health be given the delegated Authority to determine the CCTV specification that would need to be met for a system to be approved.

INTRODUCTION

1. In July 2020 the Department for Transport published a document entitled “Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards. The focus of these standards is to further protect children and vulnerable adults.
2. On the 25 July 2022 the Licensing Committee considered a report which introduced several changes to the Licensing requirements for Taxi and Private Hire vehicles to bring them in line with the Statutory Standards.
3. The standards state that all Licensing authorities should consult to identify if there are local circumstances which indicate that the installation of CCTV in vehicles would have either a positive or an adverse net effect on the safety of taxi and private hire vehicle users, including children or vulnerable adults, and considering potential privacy issues.
4. Consultation was undertaken ahead of the 25 July 2022 meeting with the public and the licensed trade. There were 77 respondents from the Licensed trade, the key responses are below: -
 - 48% (37) had been threatened whilst at work.
 - 41% (31) had CCTV already fitted in their vehicles.
 - 68% (52) didn't agree that CCTV should be mandatory, the general reason was cost.
 - 50% (37) indicated if it were to be made mandatory, they should be given at least 2 years to comply.
5. There were 95 respondents from the public survey, responses below: -
 - 4% (4) had been victim of a crime whilst using a taxi.
 - 74% (70) would feel safer in a vehicle fitted with CCTV.
 - 61% (57) believed that CCTV in licensed vehicles should be mandatory.
6. The key points from the above is that 48% of drivers have been threatened whilst at work, which is concerning and 74% of the travelling public would feel safer in a vehicle fitted with CCTV.
7. When the complaint level looked at last year, it was found to be relatively low locally and that combined with the financial hardship the drivers/vehicle owners had recently suffered with the pandemic, there were concerns about the proportionality of a blanket requirement for CCTV. So, it was not adopted at that time.

CURRENT SITUATION

8. On the 26 July 2023, Donna Jones, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, called for all Licencing Authorities across Hampshire to introduce mandatory CCTV in taxis and private hire vehicles.

9. This call was made following the conviction of taxi driver in Southampton in May 2023 for a serious sexual assault to a passenger in his taxi. The police found footage on the mandatory CCTV in the taxi which led to the conviction without the need for the victim to suffer the ordeal of a trial.
10. Given that this incident was at a neighbouring Authority and the clear benefit CCTV played in this conviction, the Committee is being asked to reconsider this matter.
11. If CCTV were to be mandated in taxi and private hire vehicles in Fareham, to address the trade's earlier concerns about cost, it would be recommended that a reasonable period for compliance be given for existing Vehicle Owners, although for any vehicles issued with new licences going forward, the requirement could take immediate effect.

RISK ASSESSMENT

12. There is a risk in relation to public safety if CCTV isn't mandated as passengers and drivers are in a more vulnerable situation where CCTV is absent.

CONCLUSION

13. Given the highly publicised conviction on CCTV evidence of a taxi driver in Southampton in May this year and the Police and Crime Commissioner's call for mandating CCTV, together with the earlier consultation result, it is recommended that CCTV be mandated in Fareham Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: None

Enquiries:

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