

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Licensing Committee – 24 June 2020

### Partition Screens in Licensed Vehicles

#### Report of the Licensing Team Leader

#### 1. Executive Summary and Recommendation

- 1.1 The authority consulted on a draft policy on installing partition screens in licensed vehicles to help protect licensed drivers.
- 1.2 Consultation with the taxi and private hire trade was undertaken between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2020. A breakdown of feedback from the trade is outlined in paragraph x of this report.
- 1.3 This report gives the committee an opportunity to consider the consultation feedback, to make further comment and observations in relation to this feedback, and, subject to this, make recommendations for adoption of this policy.
- 1.4 **The Committee is recommended to:**
- 1.4.1 **Note the consultation feedback;**
- 1.4.2 **Amend the draft policy as appropriate in light of the consultation feedback; and**
- 1.4.3 **Subject to 1.4.2, make recommendations in relation to the adoption of the draft policy at Appendix A.**

#### 1.5 Implications

1.5.1 Legal	<b>One Legal</b> <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:legalservices@tewkesbury.gov.uk">legalservices@tewkesbury.gov.uk</a></b>
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#### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has been particularly severe on the livelihoods of hackney carriage (taxi) and private hire licence holders. In order to assist the trade's recovery, the council consulted on a draft policy on installing partition screens in licensed vehicles.
- 2.2 A copy of the draft policy is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.3 As outlined in the draft policy, there is recognition that partition screens do not provide 100% protection but equally recognises that evidence suggests this type of physical barrier can reduce the rate of transmission.
- 2.4 The purpose of the policy is to provide drivers with physical protection against transmission of the virus in their workplace, to provide protection for passengers, and to, more generally, provide public confidence and assurance.

### 3. Consultation feedback

3.1 In total, 51 were received. The feedback can be broken down as follows:

Number of responses in favour	8
Of these, those in favour of mandatory requirement	2
Of these, those not in favour of mandatory requirement	6
Number of responses opposed to screens	35

### 4. Current proposals

4.1 It is not proposed that the installation of partition screens be made mandatory. The majority of the consultation feedback did not support a mandatory policy.

4.2 There are a number of reasons why respondents did not support a mandatory policy. Broadly speaking, the issues raised related to:

- a) Not all licensed vehicles do the same work and in some cases, such as Cotswold tours or executive airport transfers, a screen will be detrimental to business.
- b) Some drivers reported that their insurance providers would not allow such screens to be installed.
- c) Drivers pointed out that other means can be employed such as PPE and regular cleaning.
- d) The design of certain models of vehicles means that safety and other features such as side impact airbags, air conditioning and sunroofs will be affected by partition screens.
- e) Many licensed vehicles are also used as the main family vehicle and partition screens would not be appropriate for this.

4.3 Officers recognise that a discretionary policy will mean that screens are installed in some vehicles and not others. Whilst in principle there would not be an issue, in practice this will mean some passengers may not want to travel in vehicles with no screens.

4.4 This will be less of an issue in the context of private hire licensing since private hire vehicles must be pre-booked and the passenger can therefore request a vehicle installed with a partition screen.

4.5 The issues is slightly more complicated with public hire vehicles. However, passengers are not obligated to accept the first vehicle on a taxi rank. They are fully entitled to exercise their right of choice. Therefore, they can chose to travel in hackney carriages installed with protective screens.

### 5. Further Guidance

5.1 The LGA have issued some guidance on the installation of protective screens in licences vehicles. This guidance is available on the LGA website (<https://www.local.gov.uk/approaches-use-screens-private-hire-vehicles-phvs-and-taxis-during-covid-19-pandemic>) or an electronic copy is attached at Appendix B.

5.2 There is no official guidance from the Department for Transport on the installation of protective screens in licensed vehicles.

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