

05 FEB 2015

Head of Environmental Health.
Kettering Borough Council

Subject : Seating dimension

Mr. C. Austin
[REDACTED]

Rothwell
Northants,
[REDACTED]

Date : 03 February 2015.

Dear Sirs,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 26/01/2015, concerning seating dimensions for taxi's and private hire vehicles.

As you confirm in your letter the current rules have been in force since 1976. They have been perfectly adequate since that date and i see no reason why they should be altered.

If the new rules which you appear to have already decided to implement without consultation are enforced, i would suggest that they apply to any new vehicles licenced from that date, otherwise i can visualise substantial damage claims being made against the council for purchasing new vehicles.

I would also like to point out that the current dimensions are 406.9mm. per seat as printed in your letter dated 19/12/2012 not 400.0 mm. which is a standard size for most vehicles including my own Peugeot 207 Estate car.

Finally if any vehicles are currently licenced incorrectly they should not have the licences withdrawn or amended without a reasonable amount of notice i.e. 4 years

Yours sincerely,

C. Austin

From: linda collins [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 January 2015 17:12
To: Russ Howell
Subject: KBC Policy on Seat Width in Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles

27th January 2015, Ref KBC licensing letter to all Taxi Operators dated 26th January 2015

To The Head of Environmental Health
Kettering Borough Council
Bowling Green Road
Kettering
NN15 7QX

For the Committee to consider

Suggestions to move forward with Policy Rather than reject.

Myself, Linda Collins and my Husband, Martyn Collins have discussed this letter at length and here are our suggestions.

We feel that the minimum width of 400 mm would be acceptable if the seat is measured at the widest point as long as no part of the vehicle overhangs causing the width to narrow when vehicle doors are closed or are narrowed by any fixed or unfixed furnishings, factory fitted or otherwise that would alter width of seat, i.e. gear stick (in motion etc...) and center console as this is the point that the customers bottom is seated upon. We feel that it would be totally unacceptable to measure the narrowest point, as there is no clear clarification as to where this would be, i.e at hinge point, at crease of seat, 1 inch away from back, 2 inches away, mid seat, the list is endless.

We also feel that it would be totally unacceptable to apply the policy to vehicles that are already currently licensed with Kettering Borough Council as these vehicles have met with the policy as it stood at the time of originally applying for either the Hackney or Private Hire Vehicle Licence and it would create havoc with existing operators who have had considerable outlay to put these vehicles that met with the policy at time of licensing on to the system and would not be able to replace them easily and we feel that this would put some people unfairly out of work.

We would also like to suggest that it would be a good idea to add the Councils policy to the front of each new application for either a Private Hire or Hackney Licence, not just for the seat dimensions but what the council require to pass a vehicle to be added to the system thus eliminating any confusion as the the requirements of the council, before the fact, for the vehicle to be licensed. There is nothing on any of the licence applications that actually state, dimensions, 1st aid kit, fire extinguisher, seat dimension, no smoking stickers etc.... It may be on the website or somewhere, but surely it would be better to have it with the application so each applicant can see what is required and can not say they have not seen the councils terms before applying. This would cover the council and also give the person applying some guide. You have the Licence Conditions at the back of each licence, but nothing to say what is required for a vehicle to comply and pass onto the system.

We both do have to state that as the letter that came out to us reads, we most categorically do not accept it as it would in effect create huge problems regarding the passenger capacity of the vehicles, which have already been met and thus licensed by Kettering Borough Council. This would

most definitely affect most of the vehicles currently licensed with Kettering Borough Council and cause much financial distress.

Some of these current licensed vehicles have school runs, some from Northants County Council for example and if you all of a sudden change the requirements and cut passenger capacity it will surely cause many problems not just limited to financial, but also for many of the customer with special needs. The knock on effect would be bad.

Linda Collins
Martyn Collins
1-4-ALL TAXIS
Kettering
Northamptonshire
NN155HX



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 28 January 2015 13:43
To: Russ Howell
Cc: Lisa Vaughan
Subject: Objection to 400mm seating

Dear Mr. Howell,

I would like to lodge an official objection to the 400mm seating rule on certain vehicles when the proposal is brought up in front of the committee. My objections are based on the following:

Presently a large number of Hackney vehicles operating and already plated in Kettering are the Peugeot E7 which presently can accommodate seven passengers and a driver; I am also operating one of these vehicles. I have measured all of the seats today and while the back bench seat and the front seat conform with the proposed 400mm rule the three flip down seats do not measuring approximately 370mm each at the narrowest point. If the 400mm rule is passed on "Every" vehicle this would mean that all of the Hackney E7's and perhaps the Citroens will no longer be eligible to be plated to carry seven passengers but just four! We (Taxi operators) cannot obtain insurance for just four passengers on these vehicles as insurance companies know they have seven seats and are operated by companies up and down the country. If passed, this rule is going to cause great hardship to us as we will not be able to earn the revenue which would be in line with operating a vehicle with seven passenger seats. However, a much greater problem that we will face is the threat of violence we will face on the taxi rank on Fridays and Saturday nights. Everybody in Kettering who uses taxis regularly knows that the Hackney taxis can accommodate seven passengers. What happens very often and every weekend is groups of passengers simply bundle into the back of the taxis and want to be driven home. If we can only carry three passengers in the back customers will not understand the new rule and will refuse to get out of the vehicle, at the very least it will cause arguments, conflict and loss of earnings. People who are drunk at 4am in the morning are very difficult to deal with at the best of times, if we have to implement the new 400mm rule I can honestly say that, "Violence will take place with some drunk customers assaulting drivers!" This situation also puts the driver in a difficult position because a lot of them will want to avoid conflict, and simply drive off with more than three passengers in the back which puts them at risk from not being properly insured due to overloading and the possibility of Mr Paul Baker pulling up drivers who are forced into this situation and reporting them to the Council putting their licence in jeopardy.

While I understand that the 400mm seating rule is a good proposal for the comfort of the public for private hire, saloon cars and the front, double seats on Hackneys, it really is not a good idea to try and restrict the number of passengers from six to three in the back of the Hackney taxis. As already pointed out, we operators will be paying insurance to carry seven passengers which is currently around £1,800 a year, per vehicle plus finance charges of 13%. KBC will cut our earning capacity and cause conflict between drivers and passengers. I don't think that all of the manufactures of Hackney taxis are going to redesign their vehicles, retool their factories and go through the safety applications for one County Council! These vehicles are used all over the UK by every Borough Council and literally tens of 1000's of these Hackney vehicles are currently in operation across England, Scotland, Wales & Ireland.

It is for all of the reasons given above that I would like my objection heard by the Committee when they meet to discuss the proposed 400mm seating rule.

Thank you, Peter Hopkins
Able Cars.

From: Peter Hopkins [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 January 2015 14:42
To: Russ Howell
Cc: Lisa Vaughan; Paul Baker
Subject: Re: Follow up to 400mm seating size objection sent to you on: 28/01/2015

Dear Mr. Howell,

As the Council are currently in the process of making decisions and policies regarding seating minimum sizes in both saloon cars and Hackney taxis, I would like to take this opportunity to submit my company's views for consideration on the issue of the Council licensing saloon cars on the minimum amount of passengers as follow:

Firstly, I would like to point out that while the Council implement minimum policies with regards to seating sizes; it is understood by us (taxi operators) that the reason for the proposal is to benefit the paying public, ensuring that they travel in comfort and safety at all times. However, even if no policies were in force from the Council we as operators would implement our own "Sensible standards" as it makes perfect sense that members of the public will rebook with us if they are picked up in a clean, comfortable vehicle and are happy with the service we provide. Needless to say, this also makes very good business sense as we are in a very competitive market place. There are occasions where we are restricted to what vehicle we can use where the rules just don't make sense! A perfect example of this is the way that we (Able cars) operate a licensed, saloon, private hire vehicle. Currently all cars submitted to KBC must be able to carry four passengers for a licence to be considered. We have never taken four passengers at one time in our car as we do not use our saloon car to pick up passengers in town on short distances, only very occasionally. A situation might arise whereas a group of four friends might want to be taken to town from a residence and while most of the larger companies use saloon cars in this way and on a daily basis, we do not. We only use our saloon car for County Council school contracts picking up 1 or 2 passengers per trip. We also use our car to take up to two passengers to the Airport (never more.) Our prices vary depending on how many people wish to be taken to the Airport, for instance if five people were going we would use one of our Hackney taxis which will use considerably more fuel than a car; as a consequence of this we charge less for one or two passengers in our car than the five people going in our Hackney taxi. I will have to change our current saloon car later in the year due to the current mileage getting quite high. When looking at replacement cars to purchase many cars that are no older than four years old are priced at approximately £8,000! These vehicles are all cars that would currently satisfy the Council's policy for minimum seating size and number of passengers. Vehicles I am thinking of are the likes of the Skoda Octavia, Ford Mondeo and Volkswagen Passat. While these vehicles are all excellent they are very expensive and other than meeting the licensing conditions of the Council, they are not required by us to operate as suitable clean, comfortable vehicles. For example, I can buy a Skoda fabia estate, same age and spec as the cars above, this car can be purchased for around £5,000 saving me £3,000, £20 a year to tax, it has a 1.6 TDI engine that does 65 miles per gallon and they are very nice, comfortable cars. However, the rear seat is not 1200mm wide, maybe 1150mm so while this car is presently not able to be considered due to present licensing rules, why can't the Council licence a vehicle such as the example given for three passengers rather than the compulsory four? Two or three people in a car such as the Skoda fabia estate are very comfortable with plenty of room. This car would more than satisfy our needs as far as operating a saloon, private hire car for all the reasons given above.

I am sure that while considering this possibility the Committee will consider the possibility that a driver of a car that is licensed to carry just three passengers might be tempted to allow a fourth passenger into the car but I don't think that this is an issue because currently all saloon cars that are licensed to carry four passengers never have an issue with drivers attempting to take five passengers! As long as each passenger has a minimum of 400mm seating space and a seat belt is it not sensible to allow smaller operators like us to be able to consider slightly smaller vehicles that save us considerable amounts of money buying and operating while at the same time being totally

adequate for the work that we carry out as detailed above? Therefore I would like to request that the committee consider all of my points above and perhaps implement a three passenger licensing rule for slightly smaller cars which I think would be very sensible licensing.

Thank you for your attention on this matter.

Regards, Peter Hopkins
Able cars

KETTERING TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE ASSOCIATION

C/O 9 Alness Close
Kettering
Northants., NN15 5BJ

Tel: [REDACTED]

25th February 2015

Head of Environment Health
Kettering Borough Council
Bowling Green Road
Kettering., NN15 7QX

Email: licensing@kettering.gov.uk

Dear Sirs,

Re: Letter Your dated 26th January 2015 - Seat Dimension Policy for Hackney & Private Hire Vehicles Licensed by Kettering Borough Council

Thank you for your letter detailed above addressed to myself and my husband Mr Graham William Bale, Operators of Bales Private Hire. I wish to make it known that at no time have I ever received a copy of this letter on behalf of the Kettering Taxi and Private Hire Association. I can also confirm that the Secretary of the Association has also not received a copy of this letter and within the trade you as a council have failed to send details to drivers and others associated with the Hackney & Private Hire Trade.

As Chairman of the Association and a long term member of the Association; both my husband and I have requested so many times for the rule book to be updated. This has not be forthcoming and has always fallen on deaf ears. I have on file various emails sent to Mr Russell Howell asking if there are any updates that members should be aware of within the taxi trade, ie vehicle specification, rule book, and deregulation. Please see attached as we were interested in updating our fleet a copy email sent to Mr Howell.

I feel that there has not been sufficient time for drivers and other member of the trade to have dicussions with licensing to air their views and concerns. I object totally to the amended seat dimension, as being in the trade almost 27 years I have never encountered any complaints from customers of the current seating dimensions. Drivers and operators incurred additional costs when the Disability Act came into force, updating their vehicles to accommodate wheelchairs and side loading to M1 specification.

With the recession as it is this is a difficult time for us all, and I feel strongly that this should be withdrawn with immediate effect as not sufficient time has been allowed for the drivers and others to air their views. I am aware that new vehicles have been bought and leased and operator in the borough and can be licensed from 1st registered up to 10 years, but people should have been made aware at the time of purchasing or leasing the vehicles of the proposed reduction in their seat widths, especially since you are the licensing borough of these vehicles.

With the ever rising cost of these vehicles, higher tax, insurance, running costs etc and larger families and friends wanting to travel together, this reduction in width wont benefit them - more financial hardship. With the longer licensing hours in the town it was suggested to members of the association that there could be a reduction in their licensing fees, but the drivers and operators still await this to happen.

I feel that it would be most beneficial for your representatives from Kettering Borough Council to

come forward and listen and talk to the drivers and those associated with the Taxi trade - as most new drivers don't even know who Head of Environment Health is, or even seen a rule book.

I look forward to hearing from you, on behalf of the Kettering Taxi & Private Hire Association and as I continue to work with Kettering Borough Council and drivers and those associated with the trade.

Yours faithfully,



Myra Bale (Bales Private Hire)

Also on behalf of Kettering Taxi & Private Hire Association (Chairman)

Bales Private Hire

From: "Bales Private H [REDACTED]"
Date: 26 February 2015 19:01
To: "Mike Deely" [REDACTED]
Subject: Fw: KTPHA [REDACTED]

fyi,

Sherri

From: [Russ Howell](#)
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2013 2:30 PM
To: [Graham Bales](#)
Subject: RE: KTPHA

Sorry.

No I have nothing further at the moment. We are still awaiting the outcome of the bid for funding to review the taxi licensing process across a number of authorities in the County which will include the rule book. I will let you know when I hear anything.

Other than that, we're still waiting for the outcome of the national review of taxi and private hire licensing and again when I hear anything I will let you know.

Regards

Russ Howell
Health Services Manager - Environmental Health

☎ Telephone DD 01536 534323 Switchboard 01536 410333 Facsimile 01536 410795
✉ Email russhowell@kettering.gov.uk Website www.kettering.gov.uk

📍 Address [Kettering Borough Council, Environmental Health, Bowling Green Road, Kettering, NN15 7QX](#)

From: Graham Bales [mailto:[REDACTED]]
Sent: 26 September 2013 10:51
To: Russ Howell
Subject: KTPHA

Good morning Russell/Shirley,

I recently sent you an email, asking if there are any updates for the drivers with regards to new legislation, taxi rule book, medicals.

i am anxious for the drivers to have a meeting and would very much like to keep them informed.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Myra

27/02/2015

Bales Private Hire

From: "Bales Private Hire" <[REDACTED]>
Date: 26 February 2015 18:52
To: "Mike Deely" <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Fw: Rule Book

fyi

Myra

From: [Bales Private Hire](#)
Sent: Monday, September 15, 2014 9:26 AM
To: [Russ Howell](#)
Subject: Rule Book

Good Russell

Are we any nearer to a new Rule Book? Are there any changes with regards to laws regarding vehicles and drivers licences?

Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Myra Bale
Bales Private Hire
9 Alness Close
Kettering, NN15 5BJ

[REDACTED]

David Pope

From: marco martinelli [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 January 2015 17:09
To: Russ Howell
Subject: [SPAM] SEAT DIMENSION POLICY

Importance: Low

DEAR RUSS
(WITHOUT PREJUDICE)

REF: RMH

I HOPE I FIND YOU WELL AND WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER DATED 26 JAN 2015 .

I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS MY CONCERNS AND WORRIES IN REGARDS TO THIS SEATING POLICY, ALTHOUGH, INITIALLY THE SEATS WERE MEASURED BY A MEMBER OF YOUR STAFF AND HAS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED WERE WITHIN KBC SEAT REGULATIONS.

AS MY TAXI IS A RELATIVELY NEW VEHICLE ,LICENSED FOR 7 PASSENGERS, TO HAVE A RESTRICTION OF ONLY 4 SEATS, DUE TO SIZES BEING BELOW YOUR REQUIREMENTS AT THE NARROWEST POINTS FOR THE FOLD DOWN SEATS, THIS WOULD HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT ON MY BUSINESS.

MY WORRIES LIE ESPECIALLY WITH MY CORPERATE CUSTOMERS, NORMALLY 5 SEATS AND ABOVE, WHOM, INCIDENTLY HAVE NEVER COMPLAINED OF DISCOMFORT, AND HOW THEY WILL BE EFFECTED. THESE ARE HARD TIMES FOR THE TAXI TRADE AS A WHOLE, I AM RELIANT ON THESE CONTRACTS AND WOULD FEAR LOSING THIS SOURCE OF INCOME IF THE SEATING CAPACITY WAS COMPROMISED. WOULD IT BE MORE FAIR TO THE TAXI COMMUNITY IF THE MEASUREMENTS WERE TAKEN FROM THE WIDEST PART INSTEAD, AS THIS SEEMS MORE APPROPRIATE FOR THE CUSTOMERS SAFETY AND COMFORT.

KINDEST REGARDS

MARCO MARTINELLI ISE TAXIS