



20th June 2022

Dear Sir / Madam

Further Consultation on Important Changes to the Councils Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy (The Taxi Policy)

I am writing to invite you to comment on the proposed, revised Taxi Policy produced after consultation which took place in 2020. This incorporates new national standards and was accepted by the Council's Licensing Committee in 2021 but has not yet been adopted by the Council.

We want to take all stakeholders views into account and the Council is particularly seeking further views from the public, Councillors, and taxi trade members on the proposed, updated Taxi Policy prior to adoption.

As a result of the Covid pandemic, a further 4-week consultation has been agreed prior to adoption of a revised policy by the Council. This is to allow for further responses that may result from and reflect the effect of the pandemic on the taxi trade and the travelling public. We expect a final revised version of this new policy will come into operation later this year.

You will be able to view and download the revised policy from the Council's website by searching on the latest consultations.

By reading through the proposed policy, you will be able to see all the Council's requirements and expectations for licensed drivers, vehicles, and operators. Much of the policy remains the same or much like the current version however, some significant changes have been proposed. These include:

1. Vehicle Emissions and Manufacture Criteria

New Applications (Newly Licensed Vehicles) - New applications for vehicle licences will only be accepted for vehicles manufactured to the emissions standard "EURO 6" or higher.

Renewal Applications (Existing Vehicles / Continued Licensing)

- After the 1st January 2023, we will not accept renewal applications for licensed vehicles meeting Euro 4 or lower

Consumer Protection

Durham County Council, Annand House, PO Box 617, Durham DH1 9HZ

- After the 1st January 2024, we will not accept renewal applications for licensed vehicles meeting Euro 5 or lower

2. Removal of locality (topographical) testing requirements for private hire drivers

NOTE: Knowledge testing requirements will still apply, and prospective hackney carriage drivers will still need to be tested on both knowledge and locality matters.

3. Adoption of a new policy on offences

The Council has taken into consideration the recently published Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards and the proposals of the Institute of Licensing (IOL). The new policy does not mirror the IOL standards in all respect and our policy is in-line with the new National Standards.

4. Driver improvement scheme

Introduction of a driver improvement scheme for applicants with 6 points on their driving licences and for existing drivers who accrue 6 points.

5. Safeguarding and Disability Awareness Training

Safeguarding awareness including child sexual exploitation awareness training and disability awareness training requirements for both new and existing drivers is included in the new policy.

- **Safeguarding including CSE Awareness** - Applicants will be required to attend a Safeguarding and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) awareness training course. All drivers must undergo Safeguarding awareness training (including Child Sexual Exploitation awareness) before being licenced.

We consider that this training is so important that all drivers should undergo refresher training periodically, at least every 3 years. From 1st January 2023, all existing licensed drivers must undergo CSE awareness refresher training before their licence is renewed, if they have not already received CSE awareness training (or CSE awareness refresher training) within the previous 3 years.

- **Disability Awareness Training** - Applicants will be required to attend a disability awareness training course.

All drivers must undergo disability awareness training before being licenced. We consider that this training is so important that all drivers should undergo refresher training periodically, at least every 3 years. From 1st January 2023, all existing licensed drivers must undergo disability awareness refresher training before their licence is renewed, if they have not already received disability awareness training within the previous 3 years.

6. Contract exemption for displaying decals etc

The rules are being relaxed and rather than applying strict rules regarding the length of contracts that will enable an exemption to be applied for, considerations will be made on a case-by-case basis by senior officers in conjunction with the Licensing Chair and Vice Chairs.

7. Arrangements for dealing with serious matters that may require the immediate revocation of a driver's licence

In accordance with the Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards we have put in place a process that will allow for the immediate revocation of licences when the public is at serious and or imminent risk. In such cases, licences will not be suspended pending the outcome of a committee decision.

A decision to revoke a licence does not however prevent the issuing of a new licence should further information be received that alters the balance of probability of a decision previously made. A decision to suspend or revoke is based on the evidence available at the time the determination was made. New evidence may, of course, become available later. We will implement and operate a Fast-Track re-application process for licence reinstatement following an officer revocation in such cases. The right of appeal to a Magistrate's court also continues.

Changes to Department of Transport Guidance (DfT)

The Department of Transport are carrying out a national consultation on best practice guidance, the results of which will be issued later this year. The DfT have advised us to implement the measures covered by the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards as soon as possible in an adopted policy following this consultation. Although, we do not expect the results of the best practice guidance consultation to impact on the standards, changes to guidance may impact on our future policy. We will be in a better position to know if another consultation exercise is required when the best practice guidance is published.

Important: This second consultation will take place over 4 weeks starting Monday 20th June 2022. If you want to comment on the proposed policy, please send your comments by email to licensing@durham.gov.uk by midnight on Sunday 17th July 2022.

Please note: All consultation responses must be sent in writing to the above email address. Any correspondence or comments sent by any other means will not be considered.

Thank you in advance of your responses and to those individuals and organisations who had provided comments and feedback during the previous 12-week consultation period.

I am sorry that the consultation, development, reporting, final adoption, and publication of this new policy has taken such a long time but unfortunately there have been several unavoidable delays, mostly associated with the Covid pandemic. I greatly appreciate your patience in this respect.

Yours sincerely



**Craig Rudman
Licensing Manager**