

West Suffolk Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Conditions Policy Handbook consultation. Frequently asked questions.

General

What is a private hire vehicle?

These are licenced to carry no more than 8 passengers and must be booked in advance through a licensed Private Hire Operator. A private Hire Vehicle cannot ply for hire or use any designated taxi ranks

What is a hackney carriage?

A vehicle constructed or adapted to transport members of the public that has no more than eight seats for passengers, which is licensed to ply for hire. A hackney carriage may stand at designated taxi ranks and/or be hailed in the street by members of the public. A hackney carriage may also undertake pre booked journeys

What is a private hire operator?

These are required to take and record bookings for private hire vehicles. Bookings must be recorded, and records be made available for inspection within the specified timescales

What is a 'plying for hire'?

This is the action of picking up a passenger in response to being hailed or from a dedicated taxi rank. Only hackney carriages may ply hire.

Taxi Policy Handbook Review 2020

What changes are covered in this consultation?

This survey seeks feedback on the main changes proposed which are:

- licensing areas
- vehicle age
- livery
- time elapsed following criminal convictions
- other minor changes to policy document

When will decisions be taken on this?

The West Suffolk Council's Cabinet will consider the draft policy and consultation feedback on the West Suffolk Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Conditions Policy Handbook by the end of 2020.

Hasn't West Suffolk Council already consulted on these proposals, for example a livery? Why are you consulting again?

Some sections of taxi licensing requirements were aligned when West Suffolk Council was established in 2019. The creation of West Suffolk Council produced a single licensing authority for all of West Suffolk. This requires alignment of the remaining policy areas that apply to both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

This handbook is only of relevance to the taxi trade, so why doesn't the council just consult with drivers and operators?

Having a safe, reliable, recognisable and professional taxi trade is essential to a wide range of stakeholders, not just drivers and operators. This consultation therefore also seeks the views of those who rely on taxis to get around, including those with mobility issues, as well as members of the wider public, businesses and community groups.

Why do some authorities have a hackney carriage livery and some don't?

This is a matter of discretion for each individual authority, based on local context and preference.

Why have vehicle age limits?

While it is perfectly possible for old vehicles to be in excellent condition, the council has previously adopted age limits to ensure consistent standards of safety of our licenced vehicles. This is accompanied by regular testing of our vehicles, where vehicles have to comply with an extensive list of criteria. It is also acknowledged that newer vehicles can have reduced emissions through the use of new technologies, such as hybrid or stop-start technology.

Taxi licensing questions

How do I become a taxi or private hire driver?

Please see the [Driver's licence application](#) page.

How much does it cost for a licence?

Please see the fee's page [taxi licensing fees](#) for current information about fees.

How do I get a vehicle licensed?

Please see the separate guidance about [hackney carriage vehicle licensing](#) and [private hire vehicle licensing](#).