

# West Suffolk Council – Taxi Policy Handbook consultation. Summary of proposals

## What are we proposing to change?

### Proposal 1 – Hackney carriage licensing areas

Following the creation of West Suffolk Council, it is proposed to create a single licensing area for the whole district, whereby drivers can ply for hire anywhere. This would involve drivers being able to pick up from any rank and being hailed in any part of the district.

This proposal is intended to open up a larger market for drivers and reduce emissions through unnecessary journeys back into the driver's home licensing area.

Through the consultation, West Suffolk Council wishes to hear the views of drivers, operators, users and others on how the proposal for a single licensing area could impact on drivers and on passengers in terms of the availability of hackney carriages.

### Proposal 2 – Hackney carriage livery

**2a.** West Suffolk Council is consulting on a range of options for the future livery requirements for hackney carriages.

- Option 1     A livery requirement of black vehicle plus yellow boot and bonnet wrap for all hackney carriages in West Suffolk.
- Option 2     A livery requirement of black vehicle plus a coloured boot and bonnet wrap (other than yellow) for all hackney carriages in West Suffolk (consultees will be invited to suggest alternative colours).
- Option 3     No livery requirement.

Having a livery for hackney carriages has the advantage of making it easier for customers to distinguish hackneys from other vehicles, including private hire vehicles. It also supports effective enforcement, especially on ranks. On the other hand, having a livery would involve a cost to all or some drivers, depending on the chosen option. This could mean a cost of £300 for a boot and bonnet wrap; a vehicle respray; or the earlier replacement of a licensed vehicle, depending on the livery option and implementation timetable chosen (see question 2b).

**2b.** If a new livery were to be introduced, there are options around when it would become a requirement.

- Option 1     The new livery is only required for new or replacement vehicles from the implementation date of the policy.
- Option 2     The new livery becomes a requirement for all vehicles (including existing) from 1 January 2025.
- Option 3     An alternative implementation timetable.

## **Proposal 3 – Private hire vehicle livery**

**3a.** West Suffolk Council is consulting on two options for the future livery requirements for private hire vehicles:

- Option 1 A livery requirement of silver or white vehicles for private hire in West Suffolk (on the basis that white and silver finishes are the cheapest to purchase).
- Option 2 No livery requirement.

Having a livery for private hire vehicles (alongside door signs) would help customers identify them and distinguish them from hackney carriages. On the other hand, a livery would involve a cost to some or all drivers. This could mean a cost of a vehicle respray; or the earlier replacement of a licensed vehicle, depending on the livery option and implementation timetable chosen (see question 3b).

**3b.** If a new livery were to be introduced, there are options around when it would become a requirement.

- Option 1 The new livery is only required for new or replacement vehicles from the implementation date of the policy.
- Option 2 The new livery becomes a requirement for all vehicles (including existing) from 1 January 2025.
- Option 3 An alternative implementation timetable.

## **Proposal 4 - Age of vehicle, including maximum age of vehicle**

**4a.** We are proposing to add text to the handbook to clarify that saloon vehicles must be no more than five years old upon first registration, in line with wheelchair accessible vehicles (Appendix C, para 6.6 page 53 and para 36.5 page 65).

**4b.** We are also proposing to add a new maximum age requirement of ten years to all vehicles, except electric/zero emission vehicles, to ensure vehicles have functioning and up to date technology to reduce emissions (Appendix C, para 6.7 page 53 and 36.6 page 65).

## **Proposal 5 – Engine capacity requirements for private hire and hackney carriages (alternatively fuelled vehicles)**

We are proposing to update engine capacity requirements to allow flexibility for alternatively fuelled vehicles, including removing the engine cubic capacity requirement (Appendix C, para 18.1 page 58 and para 46.2 page 69). This is to encourage more environmentally sustainable vehicles on the road.

## **Proposal 6 – Vehicle tests and inspections**

**6a.** We are proposing to add in test and inspection requirement for hackney carriages so temporary replacement vehicle conditions are consistent with wider vehicle conditions (Appendix C para 17.5 – page 57).

**6b.** We are proposing to update vehicle testing requirements for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles so timing fits in with the annual licensing renewal process, to reduce the administrative burden on drivers and licensing officers (Appendix C, para 25.1 page 62 and para 53.1-page 73)

## **Proposal 7 - Convictions policy**

We are proposing to increase the amount of time elapsed following a conviction before a licence application can be considered, as follows. This is in order to ensure public safety while allowing the rehabilitation of offenders.

<b>7a.</b> Crimes relating to violence (Appendix A para 6.3 page 27)	Increase from 3 to 7 years
<b>7b.</b> Racially aggravated offences (Appendix A para 6.5 page 27)	Increase from 3 to 5 years
<b>7c.</b> Sex offences (Appendix A para 8.4 page 29)	Increase from 3 to 5 years
<b>7d.</b> Driving offences involving the loss of life (Appendix A 11.3 page 30)	Remove allowance for any applicants with a conviction to be considered before 7 years as some can currently be considered after 3 years

## **Proposal 8 - Other minor changes**

We are proposing to:

- a. Add a requirement that all drivers register with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) update service. This will reduce the time taken for DBS checks and allow licensing officers to check the status of a driver’s DBS at any time to ensure that only fit and proper drivers are able to drive (para 2.17 page 11 and Appendix B para 9.2 page 41);
- b. Add a new requirement for licensed drivers to undertake a refresher Safeguarding, Child Sexual Exploitation and Disability Awareness course from 1 January 2021 (para 2.30 page 13).
- c. Add new specifications for the driver application process to supply the licensing authority with the following documents (para 3.2 page 14):
  - original V5C vehicle registration document
  - original insurance/insurance cover note
- d. Add a new requirement for MOTs for vehicles over 12 months old to be less than 28 days old (para 3.2 page 14).
- e. Remove the allowance to grant PHV licences for those up to 10 miles outside of the West Suffolk District at the Council’s discretion. This ensures that the licensing authority have the powers to take proper regulatory and enforcement

measures as the Council does not have jurisdiction outside of the district (para 5.7 page 20).

- f. Add extra requirements for vehicle tyres and possession of and tyre sealant repair kit in order to ensure driver and passenger safety, as per best practice (Appendix C, para 7.7 page 54 and 37.6 page 66)
- g. Remove requirement for drivers to have a printed copy of the taxi handbook in their vehicle at all times. (Appendix B, section 19 page 44; Appendix C, section 6 page 53)
- h. Add a requirement for drivers to submit their licence to their employer (Appendix B para 19.4 page 45)
- i. Add a requirement relating to vehicle cleanliness (Appendix B para 19.16 page 47)
- j. Add a requirement for drivers to notify the Council about accidents within 72 hours of an incident (Appendix B para 19.18 page 47)
- k. Add requirements for first aid kits to provide a definition for 'good working order'. Add text to make the location of the first aid kit visible to all passengers (Appendix C, para 14.1 page 57 and 42.1 page 68).
- l. Add a requirement for clear windows to ensure driver visibility and visibility into the vehicle for driver and passenger safety, including prohibiting the addition of tinted windows on a vehicle (Appendix C, para 16.1 page 57 and para 44.1 page 68).
- m. Add a requirement relating to the location of temporary licence plates, to ensure the vehicle remains identifiable as a licensed vehicle for both enforcement and public safety purposes (Appendix C para 17.1 page 57).
- n. Update right of appeal requirements (Appendix C, para 34.1 page 64 and para 65.1 page 76)
- o. Add in text to ensure hackney carriage and private hire vehicle conditions are consistent where relevant (Appendix C, para 37.5 page 66, 45.1 page 69 and 52.3 page 74):
  - seat belt requirements
  - temporary replacement vehicle allowances
  - MOT certificates
- p. Add an allowance for private hire vehicles to be wheelchair accessible vehicles that load from the rear. This allows flexibility for the private hire trade to choose different vehicle models given that they don't use taxi ranks where space is limited (Appendix C para 47.1 page 70)