



GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday, 14 December 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: C Parris (Chair), M McKay (Vice-Chair), S Barr, N Chowdhury, M Downing, J Duncan, C Howells, G Lawrence CC, Mrs J Lloyd, L Martin-Haugh, M Notley, G Snell, A Wells and T Wren.

AGENDA

PART I

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 30 OCTOBER 2023

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 30 October 2023.

Pages 3 – 6

3. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE POLICY

To consider a proposed updated Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy.

Pages 7 – 96

4. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 - 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II items accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Agenda Published 6 December 2023

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 30 October 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Claire Parris (Chair), Maureen McKay (Vice-Chair), Nazmin Chowdhury, Michael Downing, Chris Howells, Graham Lawrence CC, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Margaret Notley, Graham Snell and Anne Wells.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.30pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Sandra Barr.

Councillor Chris Howells declared a personal interest in Item 3 – Review of Hackney Carriage Limit, as he was a Taxi Driver licensed by Transport for London.

2 MINUTES - 13 JULY 2023

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 13 July 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE LIMIT

The Environmental Health Commercial & Licensing Manager presented a report from the Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment (LVSA) in relation to unmet demand for hackney carriage and rank provision in the Borough. In the light of this report, the Committee was requested to review the Council's current policy of limiting Hackney Carriage Vehicle (HCV) licence numbers.

The Environmental Health Commercial & Licensing Manager advised that the Council currently restricted the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences issued at any one time to 100. At a meeting between the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and the Commercial and Licensing Manager in October 2022, it was agreed that an unmet demand survey be undertaken in order to inform Members regarding future policy on the limitation of hackney carriage licence numbers. Following this, officers commissioned an independent consultant, Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment (LVSA), to carry out this work, which was completed between November 2022 and February 2023. The consultant's report was attached as Appendix A to the officer report.

The Environmental Health Commercial & Licensing Manager outlined the main findings of the consultant's report as follows:

- There was no evidence of any unmet demand in the Stevenage area which was significant and required the issue of any further standard hackney carriage licences at the present time.
- There had been an estimated 44% overall reduction in passenger numbers since the last survey in 2017.
- While app-based providers appear to have gained market share, there was also clear evidence that the hackney carriage trade appeared to have remained relatively resilient, in contrast to the decline in private hire vehicle numbers.
- There remained a need for a central area rank.
- Comparing the latest national rail usage to the estimated rank passenger departures suggested 10% of all rail arrivals at Stevenage station departed using hackney carriages from the rank there. Compared to the previous survey, rail passenger numbers were down 30%, whereas for the same period rank passengers were down 36%, a relatively similar figure.
- Despite this, the issue of poor service to these customers remained at the train station rank. The rank was privately operated by Great Northern Railways and they permitted hackney carriages/taxis to ply for hire. There was a monthly fee licensed drivers paid to access the rank. It was at this rank that unmet demand was seen.

The Environmental Health Commercial & Licensing Manager stated that the consultant's report recommended:

- There was a need to identify a new town centre rank and encourage its use. This needed work between the trade, the Council, Highways Authority and the shopping centre to work out ways that appropriate signing and advertising could be undertaken.
- The issue of poor service to a small number of vulnerable people requiring accessible vehicles must be dealt with to enable them to travel safely and appropriately – this mainly related to ensuring the good provision in the hackney carriage fleet could be accessed by those preferring to book vehicles in advance.
- The option of a demonstration day for wheelchair and other accessible vehicles could be considered. This would allow the trade, councillors and those needing access to such vehicles either for themselves or for clients, such as care home representatives, to interact and build good will in this very important area. LVSA believed that this option would produce more positive results than any immediate issue of further wheelchair accessible vehicle licences.
- Within these discussions there may be need for agreeing a clear way that wheelchair accessible capable vehicles were clearly identified, e.g. with some form of label as some authorities provide (e.g. Leeds). The issue of producing a list of wheelchair vehicles and drivers should also be seriously considered and the conclusions of this publicised.

- These factors could be drawn together in an Integrated Service Plan, as recommended by the currently draft new Best Practice Guidance.

The Environmental Health Commercial & Licensing Manager commented that, on the basis of the evidence gathered in the unmet demand survey, the key conclusion was that there is no evidence of any unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages, either patent or latent, which was significant at this point in time in the Stevenage Borough Council licensing area.

The Environmental Health Commercial & Licensing Manager advised that the options available for the Committee were: Option 1 – retain the current limit of 100 hackney carriage vehicles; Option 2 – increase the number of hackney carriage licences gradually by a process of managed growth; or Option 3 – de-limit numbers completely.

In response to a number of Members' questions, the Environmental Health Commercial & Licensing Manager, assisted by the Senior Environmental Health & Licensing Manager, stated:

- The survey had highlighted that the Westgate/Danestrete Taxi ranks were underused during the day, possibly as a result of the recent Bus Station relocation. There were no fixed plans at the current time as to the possible location of a new rank closer to the Bus Station;
- Officers would investigate the possibility of the installation of a phone in town centre location to assist users in phoning for hackney carriages (similar to that operated by the town centre branch of Tesco for the calling of Private Hire vehicles);
- The option to de-limit hackney carriage numbers was not recommended in the consultant's report, as there was no evidence of any unmet demand in the Stevenage area;
- The survey had focussed on taxi journeys within the Borough of Stevenage, although drivers were able to undertake journeys outside of the Borough boundary;
- The aspiration for all Hackney Carriages to be wheelchair accessible was not feasible, as many disabled users without wheelchairs often had physical difficulty in accessing such vehicles and generally preferred non-converted vehicles; and
- The Council was able to cover its costs in the administration of the licensing of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles, but was not permitted by Central Government Guidance to make a profit.

Upon the matter being put to the vote, the majority of the Committee supported the recommendations set out in the report, including the retention of the current limit of 100 hackney carriage vehicles and licences in Stevenage (Option 1).

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That LSVA's recommendation at Section 9, first paragraph, page 55, of their report, to retain the current limit of 100 hackney carriage vehicles and licenses in Stevenage, be approved.

2. That LSVA's recommendations regarding rank provision, as set out in the second paragraph on page 55 of their report, be agreed.
3. That the siting of a new town centre taxi rank, following the relocation of the bus station, be investigated with partners and stakeholders.
4. That further assistance be provided to persons requiring wheelchair accessible vehicles to source and book them within Stevenage.

4 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

5 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

Meeting General Purposes Committee

Portfolio Area Communities, Community Safety and Equalities

Date 14 December 2023



HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE POLICY

NON-KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the proper administration of hackney carriage/taxi and private hire licensing legislation in the district. These services are an important part of the local economy and therefore fulfilling this statutory duty contributes to the Council's draft priorities of Transforming our Town and contributing to Thriving Neighbourhoods. The primary purpose of the licensing regime is to promote public safety and therefore the Council's work to licence taxi drivers, vehicles and operators also supports the commitment to work with partners to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. Further, the proposed revisions to the licensing policy include measures to reduce the carbon emissions of the taxi fleet in support of the council's commitment to protect the environment and to help achieve net zero targets.
- 1.2 Changes to the policy require approval by the General Purposes Committee. This report provides a summary of the background to the proposed changes to the policy, the consultation process being followed, a summary of consultation responses to date and the proposed revisions to the policy resulting from those responses.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee determines whether the proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy, as attached at Appendix A, should be agreed without modification or agreed with amendments.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Department for Transport recommends that all licensing authorities make publicly available a cohesive policy document that brings together all their procedures on hackney carriage and private hire licensing. The Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy addresses the Council's primary aim in carrying out its hackney carriage/taxi and private hire licensing function to protect and promote public safety. The Council must ensure that licensed vehicles are fit for purpose and that licensed drivers are 'fit and proper' in accordance with the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- 3.2 The current policy was written in 2014, is out of date as it does not meet the requirements of Statutory Guidance, Best Practice and legislation. The revised policy amalgamates the previous three individual policies and seeks to provide policy standards for all aspects of the hackney carriage/taxi and private hire trade.
- 3.3 The purpose of the policy is to:
- Ensure the safety of the public.
 - Ensure that licence holders are fit and proper and vehicles are safe and suitable.
 - Provide a robust, and legally compliant, decision-making framework which protects the Council should decisions be challenged in the Courts.
 - Provide information to the trade, elected members, officers and the wider public on how the Council administers hackney carriage/private hire licensing.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Currently the Council, through the Licensing Team, licences:
- 285 Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Drivers (dual licences)
 - Up to 100 Hackney Carriage Vehicles
 - 166 Private Hire Vehicles
 - 26 Private Hire Operators
- 4.2 The policy has been updated to reflect the licensing Authority's obligation to meet legislation, national guidance and best practice. The substantive changes to the policy are outlined below.
- 4.3 The Government's Modern Crime Prevention Strategy included a commitment to protect children and young people from the risk of child sexual abuse and exploitation by working with local authorities to introduce rigorous taxi and private hire vehicle licensing regimes. As a result, the Department for Transport has introduced Statutory Taxi and Private Hire

Vehicle Standards to replace relevant sections of the Best Practice Guidance that was issued in 2010. The introduction to the standards states - "There is consensus that common core minimum standards are required to regulate better the taxi and private hire vehicle sector, and the recommendations in this document are the result of detailed discussion with the trade, regulators and safety campaign groups. The Department therefore expects these recommendations to be implemented unless there is a compelling local reason not to."

4.4 Main policy changes

- The policy introduces mandatory training for licence holders in safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults.
- Both safeguarding and disability awareness training are new to licence holders and applicant requirements. In order to ensure all relevant licence holders receive competent training, the Council will identify suitable courses. As such, due to procurement requirements, this requirement will become mandatory once the procurement process has been completed. It is anticipated that all relevant licence holders will complete training within a 12-month period.
- A suitability policy has been devised that outlines the convictions and offences that will preclude persons from receiving or renewing a licence.
- The suitability policy follows the statutory guidance from the Department of Transport as to who can receive a licence.
- An assessment of more than 50% of the driver licence holders against the draft Suitability Policy has revealed that 3 drivers will not meet the standards of the Suitability policy with one further driver requiring to provide further details of a caution issued by Police. Those, identified with convictions will not be able to keep their licence and upon implementation of the Policy will be unable to continue as a licence holder.
- The policy revises the Council's definition of 'fit and proper'.
- An enforcement policy has been provided, which incorporates a penalty points system. These have been devised to assist licence holders who do not meet their conditions and/or statutory obligations. Penalty points and enforcement action will be managed by the Licensing Team members.
- Driver licence conditions have been updated (Appendix 4).
- Conditions of licence for vehicles have been updated in Section 10.
- Operator conditions and policy standards have been updated (Appendix 5)
- The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 has amended the Equalities Act 2010 and places obligations on licence holders to assist disabled persons.
- The policy introduces mandatory training for licence holders in disability awareness.

- A new National Register of Revocations, Refusals and Suspensions was introduced to enable local authorities to better share information about refusals, revocations and suspensions of licence holders. Since April 2023, the use of the register is mandatory. The Council utilises this new register.
- The draft policy is attached as Appendix A

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Initial consultation was conducted in late January until 28 February 2023 for a period of 5 weeks.
- 5.2 Seventy-six responses to this consultation were received from licence holders, members of the public and
- 5.3 The main comments from the first consultation related to the following main themes;
- Concerns relating to short consultation period.
Five licence holders considered the timeframe for consultation too short.
 - Concerns relating to new hackney carriage/taxis required to be wheelchair accessible.
There were 25 negative comments from Licence Holders and 5 from members of the public, one from a Councillor and 2 responses from the Lister Hospital, one in favour and one against.
 - Age policy for existing and new vehicles.
There were 162 negative comments regarding this part of the policy, asking the Council to consider the benefit of Euro 5 vehicles and petrol Euro 4 vehicles. These comments also expanded into the emissions output from vehicles and carbon dioxide emissions
 - Penalty Points system
Licence Holders submitted ten objections
 - Application process
Four licence holders objected to the language test and three to the extension of the Service's response timeframe).
 - Idling
There were three objections to the enforcement of idling in particular situations.
 - Operator licence non transferable
Three negative comments were received where an operator would move premises and this would lead to a new application.
 - Door signs
Four private hire licence holders were concerned with the stickers and door signs attracting persons to the vehicle.
- 5.4 Of the above issues, a further consultation was organised to manage the short consultation period. The Service evaluated its approach following the consultation regarding increasing the numbers of wheelchair accessible vehicles and also reconsidered its approach to licenced vehicles age policy,

following advice from the Head of Climate Action at Stevenage Borough Council.

- 5.5 For the penalty points system, affected persons are able to complain via the Council's complaint procedure should they wish. In regard to idling, the Council will take a pragmatic approach having regard to the seasons and outdoor temperatures.
- 5.6 The timeframe for the application process has increased; this is primarily enable the team to handle a large number of renewals which arrive in bulk during June and July each year.
- 5.7 The draft policy has been adapted as a result of this consultation and a second consultation period organised. Following further analysis of evidence to form the policy standard for section 10.4 'Environmental considerations and environmental friendly fleet' was also revised. A second consultation was undertaken from 12 September to 14 November 2023. Accompanying the consultation was a document outlining all of the changes from the original policies (dated 2014) and from the first draft consultation document (dated March 2023); Appendix B.
- 5.8 Consultation for the policy review has been;
- To all licence holders
 - In the local paper, the Comet on 14 September and 19 October 2023
 - Within the Customer Service Centre at Stevenage Borough Council
 - On the Council's website
 - To stakeholders; see Appendix C
- 5.9 Two responses were received from the second consultation period.
- 5.10 Comments were received from a current licence holder and from the Licensed Private Hire Car Association (LPHCA). The LPHCA is a membership-based trade association that represents licensed private hire operators in the UK. One operator in the Stevenage borough area is represented by LPHCA currently.
- 5.11 Response to consultations – Respondent 1
- 5.12 The licence holder was concerned that the penalty points system at appendix 3A is not subject to a right of appeal;
- 'The fact that there is no right of appeal means that the officer issuing points is judge jury & executioner, a totally unreasonable situation. You as our 'supposed' employer should consider your obligation to your employee, Ei incumbit qui dicit, non qui negat'*
- The draft policy at A3a.9 advises that whilst there is no right of appeal, affected persons can lodge a formal complaint to the Council using the corporate Complaints Process. Comments regarding the Council being an employer are incorrect as the Council acts only as a Licensing Authority.

5.13 Response to consultations – Respondent 1

5.14 Comments from the Licenced Private Hire Car Association;

'We welcome review on Euro 5 and Age limits.'

'We are against Knowledge Tests, for PHVs, which the Law Commission 2014 review said are not necessary.'

The Law Commission review identified the removal of local licensing conditions in favour of national standards. The Law Commission did not see knowledge tests as necessary as the journey was pre-booked and therefore planned. The knowledge test in Stevenage incorporates local destinations, knowledge of the routes to ensure shortest distances chosen, legal understanding of being a licenced driver and knowledge of national driving standards in accordance with the Highway Code.

All drivers are licensed as dual drivers, which allows them to drive a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle and interchange as necessary. As such, all drivers undertake the knowledge tests.

'Driving tests are unnecessary.'

A driving test has been a licence requirement since at least 2014. Drivers upon application undertake this test. The Licensing Authority considers the driving test useful to applicants as they may be commencing professional driving for the first time and constructive appraisal of their driving style can be valuable to applicants and improve their driving performance, having specific regard for passenger and public safety.

'Size of seats not applicable to PHVs which can be pre booked'

Vehicles are licenced in relation to how many passengers a vehicle can be expected to carry. The size of the seat defines the maximum number of passengers.

'Idling is sometimes necessary, especially in winter to keep windows clear.'

It is accepted that idling will be required at particular times of year. A pragmatic approach will be applied to enforcing this condition.

'The less signage you put on a PHV the less it looks like a taxi.'

Following clarification, the response supports hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles looking very different from each other. This is to prevent customers attempting to engage a private hire vehicle as they can be confused of the differences between them. The respondent supports minimal signage on private hire vehicles

'Livery is a nonsense and confuses the public, your policy looks good.'

'... It won't be easy to fit card machines into PHVs, often the operator can take card payments, so they are unnecessary, if there is to be a mandation for PHVs it should say have Card Payment capability, not a fitted machine.'

Technology has developed so that card readers are available to be powered through mobile phones and the touch pad via bluetooth or wifi to the mobile phone. It is not anticipated that card machines be fitted in the vehicles. The policy text is to be changed to as to read 'By 1 July 2024 all licensed hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles must be supplied ...' The word 'fitted' to be removed and replaced with 'supplied'.

'CCTV should never be mandated.'

The policy does not require CCTV as a standard condition of licence.

'PHVs are better with pre-journey quoting and do not need meters as the price can be agreed pre booking.'

The Council does not require private hire vehicles to be fitted with a meter. Where they choose to use a meter, the Council requires that the tariff applied be set by the Licensing Authority where a pre-arranged fee has not been agreed.

6 FINAL AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENT

- 6.1 Further proof reading of the policy has identified minor anomalies. In order to rectify, please see the final amendments (Appendix D) to be made prior to the Policy becoming live.

7 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 7.1 In order to effectively discharge the Council's taxi licensing legal obligations a policy framework is required. The current policy requires updating. The proposed new policy reflects changes to the statutory standards, provides clearer guidance on the taxi and private hire licensing process, and explains how the Council will make decisions in relation to the licensing of vehicles, drivers and operators. It also seeks to reduce the carbon emissions of the taxi fleet in the district.
- 7.2 To agree that General Purposes Committee adopts the revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy and supporting appendices provided with this paper.
- 7.3 To agree the Policy is implemented from 1 April 2024.

8 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no on-going financial implications arising directly from this report. The proposed changes to the Council's Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy will be met within existing budget.
- 8.2 As detailed in Section 4.4, those licence holders that will not meet the Suitability Policy will have their licences revoked. As such, they are able to appeal to the Magistrate's Court. Defending a revocation will give rise to costs to the Council.

Legal Implications

- 8.3 The revised policy provides a suitable framework for the Licensing Team to take formal action (prosecute), suspend, revoke a licence or refuse to issue or renew a licence. Through consultation and following adoption, all licence holders are aware and agree to the stance provided in the Policy.

Risk Implications

- 8.4 The Council is required to have a taxi and private hire licensing policy and any risks arising from the implementation of this policy and its revisions will be managed within the service area.

Policy Implications

As part of an overarching transport system that support Stevenage, this policy will contribute to the draft strategic priorities for Stevenage Borough Council of Transforming our Town, Thriving Neighbourhoods and Tackling Climate Change.

Environmental Implications

- 8.5 The removal of Euro 4 vehicles from the licensed fleet will have the benefit of significantly reducing carbon emissions and particulate emissions emitted by this part of the fleet.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 8.6 There are no negative implications derived from the policy.

Safeguarding Children Implications

- 8.7 The draft policy will provide a positive effect in that licence holders will have received competent training so as to be able to instigate action as necessary, during the course of their day to day duties.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

- BD1 Town Police Clauses Act 1847
- BD2 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- BD3 Statutory Guidance [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing: best practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice)
- BD4 Best Practice Guidance [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing: best practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-best-practice)
- BD5 Modern Crime Prevention Strategy [Modern crime prevention strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362277/modern-crime-prevention-strategy.pdf)
- BD6 Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022
- BD7 Equalities Act 2010

APPENDICES

- A Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing – Policy and conditions of Licence
- B Policy changes log
- C Stakeholders list
- D Final amendments log

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Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing – Policy and conditions of Licence

Issued by:

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Document control

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Definitions

Appeal	A review of our decision. Appeal is to the Magistrates' Court or the Crown Court. The Courts may uphold our decision (agree with the Local Authority) or overturn it (agrees with you).
Conviction	A court determines a person is guilty of an offence
Conviction free period	A period without any convictions
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
District	The area covered by Stevenage Borough Council
Driver vehicle.	The person licensed by a local licensing authority to drive a licensed vehicle.
DVSA	Driving Vehicle Standards Agency
DVLA	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
Fit & proper person	A person who we think has the right skills and ability assessed throughout the application process, because, for example, they: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are no threat to the public• Have a good knowledge of the district• Are healthy• Are of good character
GP	General Practitioner
Hackney Carriage/Taxi	A vehicle that can carry passengers for hire or reward. The vehicle can be hailed by its passenger from the street; can park on a rank while waiting for its passenger; is available for immediate hire.
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
Mitigating Circumstances	Circumstances, which can be presented to the Council authority to explain what happened which may reduce its seriousness and aid with determination of an application
MOT	Ministry of Transport – annual motor vehicle inspection
New vehicle	Those that are being licenced for the first time.

Vehicles whose licences (hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicles) have expired and subsequently apply. Where an existing vehicle licence expires, the subsequent application for a licence for that vehicle will be treated as a first-time application and the standards and criteria relating to first time applications will be applied. An application to change a vehicle will be required to meet the criteria for a new vehicle.

Operator	An individual or business that invites or accepts bookings for private hire, and sometimes, hackney carriage vehicles.
Person	The term 'person' applies to both individuals and bodies corporate and unincorporated.
PHO	Private Hire Operator
PHV	Private Hire Vehicle
Private hire vehicle	A vehicle that can carry passengers by prior arrangement only through a licensed operator.
Proprietor	The person(s), partnership or company named on, and who are in possession of a licensed vehicle.
Refuse/ Refusal	A decision made not to give the licence.
Revoke	To take away a licence permanently.
Suspend	To take away a licence temporarily.
The Council	Stevenage Borough Council
Written warning	A report or letter stating that an issue has caused the Council concern in regard to a person's suitability to hold a licence. Similar or repeat behaviour in the future could lead to suspension, or revocation of a licence.
Working Days	Monday to Friday, excluding public/bank holidays.

1. Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Licensing Policy is written pursuant to the powers conferred by the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, as amended, which places on Stevenage Borough Council (the Council) the duty to carry out its licensing functions in respect of hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles.

1.2 Policy objectives

1.2.1 Hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles have a specific role to play in an integrated transport system. They are able to provide safe, secure and comfortable transport, providing an on-request door to door service in various circumstances, including where public transport may not be available or for those with mobility difficulties.

1.2.2 In setting out its policy, the Council seeks to promote the following objectives:

- Public safety
- The protection of the environment
- Ensuring an efficient and effective taxi and private hire provision
- To provide and maintain a professional and respected taxi and private hire trade by continued monitoring and improvement of standards of service

1.2.3 The aim of the licensing process is to regulate the hackney carriage/taxi and private hire trade in order to promote the above objectives. It is the Council's wish to facilitate professional and responsible businesses, who respond sensitively to the wishes and needs of the general public, whilst maintaining high standard of service provision.

1.2.4 When considering this policy, the Council has tried to ensure that each requirement is properly justified by the risk it seeks to address, balancing the cost of the requirement against the benefit to the public.

1.3 Departure from the policy

1.3.1 In exercising its discretion in carrying out its regulatory functions, the Council will have regard to this policy document and the objectives set out therein.

1.3.2 Notwithstanding the existence of this policy, each application or enforcement measure will be considered on its own merits with regard to the licensing objectives. However, it is likely that departures from policy will be restricted to exceptional circumstances, not used to circumvent the reasonable requirements of the Policy.

1.3.3 Where it is necessary for the Council to depart substantially from this policy, clear and compelling reasons for doing so will be given. The Commercial & Licensing Manager may authorise a departure from the policy in accordance with this section if they consider it necessary in the specific circumstances and will advise Councillors of such decisions.

1.3.4 All applicants are expected to meet the requirements of this policy. Should an applicant be able to demonstrate that a minor departure from this policy, based on the individual circumstances of that application, would still ensure that the policy objectives are achieved, the Commercial & Licensing Manager may authorise a licence to be issued.

1.4 Policy duration

1.4.1 This policy will be kept under review and amended as and when necessary to reflect changes in legislation, case law, statutory guidance, and best practice.

1.4.2 Administrative amendments to this policy (required by virtue of legislative changes, revised statutory guidance, a Council restructure, or administrative procedural changes) may be made by the Commercial & Licensing Manager. Amendments under this section are restricted to those required to accurately reflect the current legal or administrative position rather than amendments that change the focus of local policy.

1.4.3 The policy will be periodically reviewed to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose and either amended where necessary or approved for continuation by the General Purposes Committee.

1.4.4 Minor amendments to the policy may be authorised by the Commercial & Licensing Manager in consultation with the relevant Executive Member and the Chair of the General Purposes Committee. For the purposes of this section, a minor amendment is any amendment that is an administrative change.

1.4.5 In the event of any significant amendment to the policy, a full public consultation will be undertaken prior to consideration by the General Procedures Committee who may amend the policy as it deems appropriate. For the purpose of this section, a significant amendment is defined as one that:

- will have significant financial impact on applicants, licence holders or the public
- will have a significant procedural impact on applicants, licence holders or the public
- may not be perceived by the trade or the public to be consistent with the policy objectives set out in section 1.2 above.

1.4.6 It is anticipated that the amendments to the policy will happen in relation to the transfer of the fleet to zero emission vehicles following the step changes required by the UK Government as and when they arise.

1.5 Application Procedures and Service Standards

1.5.1 The Council will:

- Initiate processing of any new or renewal application within four (4) working days of receiving a completed application form and all associated documentation
- Process any other amendments or adaptations to licenses, such as change of address within four (4) working days of receipt of all required documents and forms

1.5.2 It is the applicant's responsibility, whether at application or renewal to ensure their documents are received in a timely fashion by the Council, in order to, grant or renew a licence. The Council has no responsibility in ensuring that the operator or driver is aware of all of their licence expiry dates relating to their badge and vehicle plate licences. As a matter of courtesy, reminders to existing licence holders may be issued in advance of the expiry date of the current licence via email.

1.5.3 A first-time applicant is required to complete all checks and tests within twelve (12) months of the Council receiving the application. After this timeframe, the application will be void requiring the applicant to restart the process.

1.5.4 Any application for renewal that has been received by the Council with less than fifteen (15) working days prior to the expiry of the current licence cannot be guaranteed to be renewed before the expiry of the current licence and, consequently, the licence may expire. In this case the driver or vehicle concerned would not be licensed and therefore unable to work. The Council is not responsible for delays due to the actions of external bodies such as the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

1.5.5 During the time between the expiry of the old licence and renewal being granted, no licence will be in place. Any person (driver or operator) working in between expiry and renewal will therefore be treated in the same way as an unlicensed individual and the appropriate enforcement action will be considered.

1.5.6 The Licensing Authority may share all information with other public bodies such as other councils, the Police, Home Office Immigration Compliance Enforcement, National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN), Driver Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Information will only be released in response to a properly made formal request and where there is a valid reason to do so, for example investigation of a criminal offence. The Council will contact other authorities where individuals that have been licensed elsewhere for any relevant information to the application being considered.

1.5.7 The Council will consider all applications, on their own merits, once it is satisfied that the application's criteria have been met and the application form and supporting documents have been correctly completed and received by the Council.

1.5.8 The Council will also have regard to its Suitability Policy (Appendix 1) when considering both new and renewal applications for dual driver's and operator's licences.

1.5.9 Taxi Forum

1.5.9.1 The Council works closely with the trade on a day-to-day basis and also organises a taxi forum to advise, notify and discuss issues that may affect licence holders. All licence holders with Stevenage are welcome to attend and participate.

1.5.9.2 The forum is arranged so that there are a minimum of 3 meetings a year.

2. Private Hire and Hackney Carriages/taxi Licences

2.1 Licensing authorities can issue two types of licence allowing individuals to act as hackney carriage/taxi or private hire drivers while driving appropriately licensed vehicles. In Stevenage, dual licences are issued to drivers, enabling them to work as a hackney carriage/taxi driver or private hire driver. A licence is also issued to private hire operators and proprietors of vehicles. All licences (driver, vehicle, and operator) must be issued by the same authority.

2.2 Hackney carriages are public transport vehicles which are licensed to "ply for hire". They can:

- carry passengers for hire or reward
- be hailed by prospective passengers in the street
- park on a rank to await the approach of passengers.

2.3 These vehicles have a roof light with the word TAXI on them. They have a yellow plate affixed to the rear which carries details of the expiry date, licence number, model and vehicle registration.

2.4 Private hire vehicles are public transport vehicles. However, a private hire vehicle cannot ply for hire or stand in a rank. It must be pre-booked with a private hire operator usually by telephone or via the internet.

2.5 They have a green plate affixed to the rear and carries details of the expiry date, licence number and vehicle registration. These vehicles are not insured to ply for hire.

2.6 Licence fees

2.6.1 The legislation and established case law provides that licence fees should be sufficient to cover the costs of inspecting vehicles, providing taxi stands and administering the control and supervision of hackney carriages/taxis and private hire licence holders.

2.6.2 Other aspects of attaining and renewing a licence, such as knowledge tests, spoken English tests, DBS checks, medical checks etc will be charged to the applicant separately.

2.6.3 The fees currently required for the grant or renewal of hackney carriages/taxi and private hire licences are published on the Council's website. The fees are reviewed annually as part of the Council's fees and charges process.

2.7 Payments

2.7.1 The Council accepts payment by debit or credit card only. The Council will be introducing on-line payments in the near future and will allow applicants to pay their licence fees using this method. A launch date for on-line payments has yet to be announced.

2.8 Refunds

2.8.1 Ordinarily, the Council will not offer a refund to applicants or licence holders for fees paid to seek or renew a licence if the application is not completed. Should a licence be voluntarily surrendered, the Council does not offer a refund for the remaining portion of the licence that is redundant. Licences that are suspended, revoked, or are removed during the life of the licence will not be applicable for refund.

2.9 Duplicate copies

2.9.1 Where the Council receives a request for a duplicate copy of any previously issued licence, an appropriate fee will be paid to cover the administrative costs in providing the copy.

3. Role of the hackney carriage/taxi and private hire trade

3.1 The hackney carriage/taxi and private hire fleet provide a transport provision that fulfils a gap where buses, trains and other public transport services cannot; in that buses stop operating at particular times and offer reduced services on certain days and persons with mobility issues may prefer a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle to transport them rather than other forms of public transport.

3.2 Accessibility

3.2.1 The Council is committed to social inclusion and ensuring a wide variety of opportunities is available to those with mobility difficulties in order to enjoy a high quality of life. It fully supports the view of the Equality and Human Rights Commission that,

Making successful journeys is critical to the social inclusion of disabled people. Without the ability to travel, disabled people are denied access to life opportunities. Their access to education, shopping, employment, healthcare,

as well as social and family life is significantly improved when journeys become accessible.

3.2.2 It is arguable that different accessibility considerations should apply between taxis and private hire vehicles in that taxis can be hired in the street or at a rank, by the customer dealing directly with a driver whereas private hire vehicles can only be booked through an operator. As such, a private hire booking is pre-planned and a choice of vehicle and company can be made, whereas a hackney carriage/taxi booking can be an immediate decision to hire and as such, these vehicles should offer accessibility to as many of the population as possible.

3.2.3 The Council considers it particularly important that a person with a disability should be able to hire a suitable accessible vehicle with the minimum delay or inconvenience. Having an acceptable proportion of accessible hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles available helps ensure that this is possible; therefore, the Council will require and actively encourage the licensing of sufficient accessible vehicles and have regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and any subsequent equalities legislation.

3.2.4 The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 has amended the Equalities Act 2010 and places duties on drivers to

- accept the carriage of any disabled person, provide them with reasonable mobility assistance, and carry their mobility aids, all without charging any more than they would for a non-disabled passenger.
- Provide any disabled passenger who requests it with assistance to identify the vehicle, at no extra charge.

3.2.5 Private Hire Vehicle operators will be required to accept bookings for or on behalf of any disabled person if they have a suitable vehicle available.

3.3 Taxi Tariff

3.31 Hackney carriages/taxi tariff is set by the Council. They are the maximum fee that can be imposed and can be negotiated and agreed by the customer to be lower. The driver cannot request a higher fee than the tariff.

3.3.2 The General Purposes Committee of the Council agreed that the taxi tariff will be reviewed annually, usually the first meeting of the new Committee (July). The Council will consult with the trade and follow the appropriate procedures detailed the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1976.

3.3.3 The maximum fares currently prescribed by the Council are available on the Council's website. The taxi tariff must be displayed in each relevant vehicle so that it is visible to all customers.

3.3.4 For journeys that start or end outside the district, they can be negotiated prior to the commencement of the journey without using the meter.

Unless such an agreement is reached prior to the start of the journey, the fare charged should reflect the meter amount. For all other journeys, the meter must be used.

3.3.5 Some private hire vehicles use a meter to cost their fares. Where a taximeter is used, it must meet the current taxi tariff issued by the Council. The licence holder has the discretion to agree a fare with the customer at the time of booking and the driver should not request more than the agreed amount.

3.3.6 Hackney carriages/taxis and private hire drivers must, if requested, provide a written receipt for the fare paid.

4. Powers and duties

4.1 The Council is obligated to regulate hackney carriage/taxi and private hire vehicles, driver, and private hire operators in the Borough. This is derived from the following legislation

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (as amended)
- Road Safety Act 2006 (Sections 52-53)
- Immigration Act 2016
- Deregulation Act 2015
- Equality Act 2010

4.2 The aim of the above legislation and the Council's duty to licence is to ensure the public is safe and protected. This includes persons using hire vehicles and the wider public who can be affected by the use or misuse of the licenced vehicles.

4.3 The Council achieves this by ensuring

- The fitness and propriety of any person applying for, or holding, a hackney carriage/taxi, private hire, or dual driver's licence
- The suitability, roadworthiness, mechanical soundness and visual appearance of any vehicle licensed, or proposed to be licensed, as a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle
- The fitness and propriety of any person applying for, or holding, a private hire operator's licence; and
- The prevention of unlicensed persons from carrying out any of the regulated activities, through proactive or reactive enforcement and compliance work to detect and, where appropriate, take action against such persons.

4.4 The Council has defined its understanding of the meaning of 'fit and proper' at Appendix 2.

4.5 It is anticipated that all applicants and renewal applicants are aware of this Policy, its purpose for being in place and can meet the standards outlined in the Policy.

4.6 The Council's enforcement procedure for hackney carriage/taxi and private hire licence holders is outlined in Appendix 3.

5. Authorised Officers

5.1 All Officers of the Council, duly authorised under the Council's Scheme of Delegation and supported by specific written delegations, are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, except for any issues reserved for the Commercial & Licensing Manager, Senior Environmental Health & Licensing Manager or General Purposes Committee.

5.2 Some aspects of this policy are reserved for particular posts.

5.3 The Commercial & Licensing Manager is responsible for

- The management of the Council's authorised officers
- Departures from the policy in accordance with section 1.3.3
- Changes to the administration process set out in section 1.5
- The issuing of Stop Notices under section 68 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976)
- Revocation of existing licenses
- Amendments to this policy as described in 1.4.2

5.4 The Senior Environmental Health & Licensing Manager is responsible for

- Fulfil the Commercial & Licensing Manager's responsibilities in their absence
- Setting the hackney carriage/taxi and private hire licensing fees and charges
- Authorise prosecutions of licence holders

5.5 The General Purposes Committee is responsible for

- The annual review of the taxi tariff
- The decision to refuse to renew existing licence
- The decision to refuse a new licence

6. Whistleblowing

6.1 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection for those who have a reasonable belief of serious wrongdoing, including failure to comply with professional standards, council policies or code of conduct.

6.2 The Council has an effective internal procedure for staff to raise concerns on any council function, including the Licensing Authority function and for any concerns to be dealt with openly and fairly.

7. National Register of Taxi Licence Refusals and Revocations and Suspensions (NR3S)

7.1 The Council provides information to the National Register of Taxi Licence Refusals and Revocations (NR3S) as obligated in accordance with Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022: a mechanism for licensing authorities to share details of individuals who have had a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire driver's licence revoked, suspended or an application for one refused. Where a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire driver's licence is revoked, an application for one refused, or a driver is suspended, the authority will automatically record this decision on NR3S.

7.2 All applications for a new licence or licence renewal will automatically be checked on NR3S. If a search of NR3S indicates a match with an applicant, the authority will seek further information about the entry on the register from the authority which recorded it. Any information received as a result of an NR3S search will only be used in respect of the specific licence application and will not be retained beyond the determination of that application. This is a mandatory part of applying for a hackney carriage or private hire driver licence.

7.3 The information recorded on NR3S it will be limited to:

- name
- date of birth
- home address
- national insurance number
- driving licence number
- decision taken
- date of decision
- date decision effective
- end date of suspension

7.4 Information will be retained on NR3S for a period of 11 years.

7.5 Information will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) any searches, provision or receipt of information under NR3S is necessary for our statutory licensing functions of ensuring that all drivers are fit and proper to hold the applicable licence. It is not intended that any NR3S data will be transferred out of the United Kingdom.

7.6 Under the GDPR an applicant has rights which include the right to request a subject access request. This is a copy of all your personal data that the Council hold. You can submit this request by accessing the following webpage: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/freedom-of-information-act>

7.7 If you wish to rely on any other GDPR rights you can see what they are on the Council's website: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/access-to-information/data-protection-act>

7.8 You always have the right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Advice on how to raise a concern about handling of data can be found on the ICO's website: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

8. Right to Licence

8.1 Upon application for drivers and operators, a suite of checks is undertaken to ensure the applicants are legally able to work in this licensable area.

8.2 Prior to an application being progressed, applicants as hackney driver/taxi and private hire drivers and private hire operators must be able to demonstrate their legal right to licence. The Council is unable to presume a legal right of any applicant to work in the UK and as such is required to ensure these checks on all applicants are carried out.

8.3 The two checks for right to licence are

- right to work in the UK
- a HMRC tax check

8.4 The Immigration Act 2016 has amended existing licensing regimes in the UK to prevent illegal working in the taxi and private hire sector. Since 1 December 2016, the provisions in the 2016 Act have prohibited all licensing authorities across the UK from issuing licences to anyone who is disqualified by reason of their immigration status. This duty is discharged by the Council through conducting immigration checks. The 2016 Act also embeds other immigration safeguards into the existing licensing regimes across the UK.

8.5 The provisions mean that driver and operator licences are not issued to people who are unlawfully present in the UK, who are not permitted to work, or who are permitted to work but are subject to a condition that prohibits them from holding such a licence.

8.6 If you're an individual, company or any type of partnership you must complete a tax check if you're:

- renewing a licence
- applying for the same type of licence you previously held, that ceased to be valid less than one (1) year ago
- applying for the same type of licence you already hold with another licensing authority

8.7 First time applicants do not need to complete a tax check and should follow the 'confirm your tax responsibilities' guidance if you have:

- never held a licence of the same type before

- had a licence of the same type that ceased to be valid one (1) year or more before making this application

9. Drivers

9.1 Drivers competency

9.1.1 Legislation states before granting a licence for a hackney carriage or private hire driver, the Council must satisfy itself that:

- The applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a driver's licence; and
- The applicant is authorised to drive a motor car by holding a valid driving licence and has been so for at least twelve (12) months.

9.1.2 In accordance with the 1976 Act, licences may not be granted to any person who has not been authorised to drive a motor car for at least twelve (12) months, or who is not so authorised at the time of application.

9.1.3 The Council requires applicants for hackney carriage/taxi or private hire driver's licences to demonstrate their competency by passing the tests described below.

9.1.4 Upon initial application for a licence with the Council

- Knowledge Test
- Spoken English Test
- Disclosure and Barring check
- Medical suitability
- DVSA Licence check
- Professional driving test
- NR3S

9.1.5 Upon renewal, applicants must provide

- an in date medical certificate, where applicable
- DBS check
- DVLA check
- Right to licence check
- NR3S

9.1.6 Drivers are also required to complete suitable safeguarding training for children and vulnerable adults from a choice of providers nominated by the Council.

9.2 Knowledge Test

9.2.1 The Council requires licensed drivers to have a good working knowledge of the area for which they are licensed. All new applicants are required to complete the Council's knowledge test, which covers the following parameters

- Knowledge of Council's licensed district and its immediate surroundings
- the Highway Code
- the statutory legislation relating to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle use
- the conditions of licensing for hackney carriage vehicles, private hire vehicles, drivers and operators within the Stevenage licensing district
- relevant road traffic legislation; and
- basic numeracy and literacy

9.2.2 The knowledge test, successfully completed is valid for the period of time the application has to run before it comes void. For example, the test taken in month one of the application process it remains in date for eleven (11) months.

9.2.3 The knowledge test is completed under exam conditions. The invigilating Officer will maintain these conditions throughout. This means that applicants

- will be turned away if they do not arrive on time
- will fail their test should their behaviour be inappropriate, for example, talking, use of mobile phones, being disruptive.
- Must undertake the test and complete it without obtaining assistance from others, such as copying another applicant's answers, or otherwise trying to gain an unfair or improper advantage.

9.3 Spoken English language

9.3.1 All applicants will be required to take an English language test. It assesses an applicant's proficiency in the speaking, reading, listening, and understanding of the English language. Drivers are required to understand written documents such as policies and guidance, particularly in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults and applying this to identify and act on signs of exploitation, by communicating with passengers and being able to understand their interaction with others. The Council expects that proficiency in communicating and understanding English is vital to ensure the licensed driver is safe and can deal with potentially volatile customers that they may encounter during their work. It is also important that the customer can easily communicate with the licensed driver, as necessary.

9.3.2 The spoken English test is provided by an external provider. The current pass mark ensures applicants:

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

9.4 Unsuccessful completion of Knowledge and spoken English Tests

9.4.1 Applicants undertaking these tests can re-sit the tests on two (2) further occasions. Should an applicant fail each test on three (3) occasions, they are unable to apply for a further test until three (3) months has elapsed to enable the applicant to reflect and develop their skills in the areas which led to failure of the test.

9.5 Driving Proficiency and Qualifications

9.5.1 All applicants undertake a driving assessment as part of the application process to ensure they are suitably competent to drive professionally.

9.6 Vulnerable adult and child safeguarding

9.6.1 As a profession, hackney carriage/taxi and private hire drivers have a special responsibility for the safe transportation of fare paying passengers.

9.6.2 All applicants for a hackney carriage/private hire driver's licence will be required to complete

- disability awareness training (Equality Act 2010)
- approved safeguarding training for vulnerable adults and children, in order to obtain a licence.

9.6.3 Existing drivers will be required to complete disability awareness training and safeguarding training that is recommended by the Council within twelve (12) months of the introduction of this policy.

9.7 DVLA Driving Licence

9.7.1 Applicants will be required to produce their current, full driving licence showing the applicant's current home address for inspection at the start of the initial application process.

9.7.2 Applicants are required to provide a DVLA check code with their application so that their current driving licence record can be checked. We will also require applicants to sign a consent form to enable similar checks to be possible during the validity of their licence of their application (where it is successful). These checks will be carried out both in a targeted manner, i.e. when information is received that raises potential concerns about a driver's record, and also randomly to ensure that drivers are advising us of any driving offences. Drivers refusing to supply driving licence information on request may be suspended with immediate effect if it is considered that this is necessary for the protection of the public. The application form includes a section where the applicant signs to give their consent for this check.

9.7.3 All applicants must hold a full UK driving licence. The Council requires any applicant who holds a driving licence issued by a non-UK country to obtain a British licence, prior to making their application. This will ensure that the applicant is formally recorded on UK driving licence databases and may be allocated licence endorsements and penalty points for motoring offences

committed in the UK, thus creating an ongoing record on driving conduct of a type relevant to professional drivers. The British licence must be produced on making an application. Individuals can exchange their existing licence to a British one using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/exchange-foreign-driving-licence>

9.7.4 Where an applicant has less than three (3) years on their UK driver's licence, any licence issued by the Council will expire when the UK driver's licence expires. An application to renew the licence must be accompanied by evidence of the renewed entitlement to drive in the UK.

9.7.5 As part of the renewal process, applicants are required to provide a DVLA check code with their application so that a driver's licence check can be undertaken with the DVLA.

9.7.6 If a licence holder has been disqualified from driving during the validity of the licence, the Council will suspend or revoke the licence(s) held by that person.

9.8 Medical Examination

9.8.1 The following is an extract from The Department of Transport Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance: -

It is clearly good practice for medical checks to be made on each driver before the initial grant of a licence and thereafter for each renewal. It is common for licensing authorities to apply the 'Group 2' medical standards - applied by DVLA to the licensing of lorry and bus drivers - to taxi and PHV drivers. This seems best practice.

9.8.2 The Council requires each applicant, for the grant of a driver's licence to undergo all components of a Group 2 medical examination to assess their physical, mental and visual fitness to drive a licensed vehicle. The medical practitioner must state whether, in their opinion, the applicant/driver complies with the standards and are medically fit to drive hackney carriages or private hire vehicles. The medical examination report must be returned to the Council before a licence will be determined.

9.8.3 Where the medical practitioner has stated that they do not consider the applicant to be medically fit, in accordance with the Group 2 standards, to drive hackney carriage or private hire vehicles, the Council will refuse the application.

9.8.4 Applicants for the initial grant of a driver's licence must undergo the medical examination prior to the grant of the first licence. Thereafter licence holders will be required to undergo a medical examination on reaching forty-five (45) years of age and every five years thereafter. On reaching the age of sixty-five (65) years, applicants will be required to undergo an annual medical examination.

9.8.5 Medicals will need to be completed by the applicant's own GP or by another suitably qualified medical practitioner who has had access to their medical records. This should be no older than three (3) months at the time of the application/resubmission.

9.8.6 Licensed drivers must advise the Council as soon as reasonably practicable, but no later than five (5) days after notification, of any deterioration of their physical, mental, or visual health that may affect their fitness to drive a licensed vehicle.

9.8.7 Where there is any doubt as to the medical fitness of any applicant or licence holder, the Council may require that person to undergo a medical examination by a medical practitioner nominated by the Council.

9.9 Diabetic applicants/drivers

9.9.1 Diabetic applicants are not precluded from obtaining a driver's licence. For diabetic applicants/drivers whose treatment carries a risk of inducing hypoglycaemia, such as insulin treatment or certain types of tablets, further documents are required. In addition to a medical certificate confirming that the applicant satisfies the Group 2 standards (which make specific provisions for various types of diabetes treatment), additional documents will be required

In all such cases, we will require a signed declaration from the applicant, confirming that they will

- Comply with the directions for treatment issued by the Doctor supervising that treatment
- Immediately report to the Council, in writing, any change in your diabetic condition
- Provide the Council evidence that blood glucose monitoring is being undertaken at least twice daily and at times relevant to driving a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle for employment.
- In the case of applicants undergoing insulin treatment, the Council will also require a letter from a Consultant Diabetologist confirming that the applicant has been undergoing insulin treatment for a minimum of four weeks.

9.10 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

9.10.1 All applicants are required to obtain an Enhanced DBS Certificate with Barred Lists check and to provide this to the Council. The initial certificate must be obtained through the Council; certificates obtained through other authorities will not be accepted. All applicants are also required to maintain their Certificates through the DBS Update Service throughout the life of their licence. In line with the DFT standards, we will conduct DBS checks every 6 months. Anyone who wishes to be a licensed driver must obtain a disclosure at the enhanced "Other Workforce" level.

9.10.2 In the interest of public safety, an applicant/driver that appears on the Barred List for children or adults will be refused a licence.

9.10.3 Furthermore, applicant details will be sent to Hertfordshire Police to obtain any further information that may be relevant to the Council in determining the application via the Common Law Police Disclosure.

9.10.4 Hackney carriage/taxi and private hire drivers are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that there are no “spent” convictions and therefore all criminal convictions can be taken into account by the Council when assessing safety and suitability. “Protected convictions” and “protected cautions” will not be taken into account.

9.10.5 Applicants for all licence types are required to disclose on their first application all convictions, cautions, warnings, or reprimands received by completing the relevant section of the respective licence application form. The applicant is also required to declare any ongoing criminal investigations, prosecutions, or similar legal proceedings involving them.

9.10.6 Failure to declare any conviction, or caution can affect your suitability as a driver. The Council will address any failures to declare in accordance with its enforcement procedure for drivers.

9.10.7 Applicants, who have lived outside of the UK and have been resident in the United Kingdom for less than five years, will also be required to provide Certificate(s) of Good Conduct (Citizenship) from each county that they have resided in for the five (5) years prior to obtaining residency in the UK. Guidance is available via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants>

9.10.8 All licence holders are required to inform the Council in writing within forty-eight (48) hours if they are arrested, charged, or convicted of an offence or formally interviewed as a suspect by the Police. This is to allow the Council to consider any public safety concerns and take appropriate action. Failing to notify us is likely to result in more severe enforcement action (even where the issue in itself does not lead to revocation and or prosecution).

9.11 Exemption Certificates

9.11.1 Carriage of wheelchairs: medical exemption certificates

9.11.1.2 Given that the main reasons for a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle driver to request a medical exemption are likely to be back or muscle-related injuries, which are not likely to be conducive to driving for long periods, the Council expects the number of drivers likely to be eligible for an exemption to be low.

9.11.1.3 Drivers will need to provide medical evidence to support their application.

9.11.1.4 Most drivers with a medical condition severe enough to warrant an exemption are likely to be under a specialist/consultant medical practitioner and the Council will require evidence of the condition to be provided from them.

9.11.2 Carriage of assistance dogs: medical exemption certificates

9.11.2.1 The main reasons a taxi or private hire vehicle driver may wish to apply for a medical exemption are:

- if they have a condition such as severe asthma, that is aggravated by contact with dogs
- if they are allergic to dogs; or
- if they have an acute phobia to dogs.

9.11.2.2 The Council therefore expects the number of drivers likely to be eligible for an exemption to be very low.

9.11.2.3 Drivers will need to provide medical evidence to support their application.

9.11.2.4 If a driver has severe asthma or a known allergy to dogs, they are likely to have a medical history and an appropriate medical specialist should hold relevant information about their condition. If a driver has a chronic phobia to dogs, the Council expects this to be supported by a report from a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist before a driver is granted an exemption. Most drivers with a medical condition severe enough to warrant an exemption are likely to be under a specialist/consultant medical practitioner and the Council will require evidence of the condition to be provided from them.

9.11.3 Suitable medical professionals: medical exemption certificates

9.11.3.1 Examples of suitable medical professionals include, but are not limited to

- medical specialist/consultant
- specialist nurse (for example, an asthma nurse); or
- the Council's nominated independent doctor.

9.11.3.2 In exceptional circumstances, where no other alternatives are available, the Council may consider evidence from the applicant's General Practitioner.

9.11.3.3 The applicant will be responsible for all costs associated in the provision of the necessary medical evidence.

9.12 Length of a Drivers Licences

9.12.1 The grant of a hackney carriage/taxi and private hire driver's licence will usually be for a period of three (3) years. Applicants and drivers renewing their licence can request a one (1) year licence.

9.13 Good driver standards

9.13.1 Good driver standards for those driving hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles have been developed to promote the Council's licensing objectives. The standards expected are detailed in Appendix 4. These standards outline how a driver demonstrates their 'fit and proper' status.

9.13.2 Drivers are required to comply with all parts of this Policy including all requirements of the Policy and conditions that form a part of their licence. Any driver who contravenes the Policy or any of these conditions may be deemed not fit and proper to hold a licence.

10 Vehicles

10.1 Limitation on numbers

10.1.1 The Council has a maximum number of hackney carriages/taxis that are able to be licenced to one hundred (100). This restriction has been in place for a number of years. The Council routinely monitors the restriction via an unmet demand survey, carried out every three years.

10.1.2 No powers exist for licensing authorities to limit the number of private hire vehicles that they licence.

10.2 Disclosure check for Proprietors

10.2.1 As part of the Council's duty to ensure public safety, all proprietors are required to provide a basic disclosure certificate from the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) with every vehicle application.

10.2.2 The Council will consider whether an applicant or licence holder with a conviction for offences provided in the Appendix 1, other than those relating to driving, meet the 'fit and proper' threshold.

10.2.3 In many cases individuals who apply to licence a vehicle may already be licensed as a driver. If an applicant is already a licensed driver in Stevenage, they do not need to complete a basic disclosure.

10.2.4 Vehicle licences may be applied for by a company or partnership. In those circumstances, the Council will apply the 'fit and proper' test to each of

the directors or partners in that company or partnership. For this to be effective, proprietors are required to advise the Council of any change in directors or partners.

10.3 Vehicle Type

10.3.1 Licensed vehicles shall have Provisional GB Type Approval and be compliant with the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations in effect at the time of application.

10.3.2 All hackney carriage/taxi and private hire vehicles must:

- Be suitable in type, size, and design for use as a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle
- Be capable of carrying not less than four (4) nor more than eight (8) passengers
- have a minimum of four opening doors, two on each side of the vehicle, except for London style taxis and mini-bus style vehicles which should have a minimum of two doors provided for the exclusive use of passengers.
- Have a minimum passenger seat width of 16" (41 cm) per passenger
- Be provided with sufficient luggage space for the number of passengers for which the vehicle is licensed.
- Be finished in a manufacturer's standard colour
- Be right hand drive, except for stretched limousines. This is to ensure passengers travelling in the front passenger seat can exit the vehicle directly onto the pavement rather than directly into the carriageway.
- Be maintained to a high mechanical standard, hence any MOT advisory relating to tyres or brakes must be rectified before a licence is granted or renewed.

10.3.3 The Council also reserves the right to extend this requirement to other MOT advisories where they deem it necessary for the protection of the public. When an MOT is undertaken during the life of the licence, advisories must be addressed, as above, to avoid further action including the suspension of the licence.

10.3.4 All vehicles must be maintained to their original specification whilst the licence remains in force. This includes all supporting systems such as air conditioning, heated screens etc.

10.3.5 All vehicles must be maintained to a high visual standard of appearance both internally and externally in particular, the exterior of the vehicle shall

- Be free of large and/or sharp-edged dents
- Be free of visible rust
- Be free of unrepaired accident damage
- Have uniform paintwork equivalent to that applied by the manufacturer
- Be maintained in an acceptable state of cleanliness
- The interior shall:

- Be free of all stains to the upholstery
- Be free of all splits and tears to the upholstery
- Be maintained in an acceptable state of cleanliness.

10.3.6 For the avoidance of doubt, any vehicle that would not pass an interim vehicle inspection or a MOT must not be used until such time as the requirements of the Interim Vehicle Inspection and MOT testing can be met.

10.4 Environmental Considerations and environmentally friendly fleet

10.4.1 The Council have given careful consideration to the recommendation in the Guidance that, in the interests of the environment, more stringent emissions standards should be introduced for all licensed vehicles and considers its responsibility in protecting the environment to be a predominate factor within licensing policy, particularly given the Council's declaration of a climate emergency and its target to reach net zero by 2030.

10.4.2 The Council requires all new vehicles to meet Euro 5 emission standards as a minimum. All vehicles are required to undertake six (6) monthly MOT inspections to ensure they are maintained, mechanically, at a high standard and that emissions do not exceed the legislative standard for the age and fuel type of the vehicle.

10.4.3 Emissions from hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles could be further reduced through education and raised awareness of environmental issues. Simple measures such as:

- better and more frequent vehicle maintenance and servicing; or
- switching off engines when stationary or idling, particularly at taxi ranks, can make a significant environmental impact considering the number of licensed vehicles. The Taxi Forum have an important role to play in raising awareness of environmental issues.

10.4.4 The Council will seek to strike an appropriate balance between protecting the environment and ensuring sufficient transport provision in the Borough. The Council is particularly aware that many elderly and vulnerable residents are dependent on hackney carriage/taxis and private hire vehicles to undertake essential journeys i.e. shopping, social interaction and medical appointments. Additionally, hackney carriage/taxis and private hire vehicles are an essential part of the transport infrastructure for many other persons, particularly school children and those without their own means of transport.

10.4.5 The Council is aware of the Government's intention to introduce a ban on the sale of new petrol, diesel, and hybrid cars in the UK by 2035 at the latest.

10.4.6 The Best Practice Guidance recognises that older cars can be in good condition to maintain a licence. The Council recognises that older cars have higher emission standards that will affect the Council's concern and its declaration of a climate emergency in Stevenage. As such, to meet the

Council's objectives, vehicles will be required to meet an age criteria to remain licenced in the coming years;

- From 1 February 2024 all licenced vehicles that are classed as Euro 4 will not be renewed or granted, for new applications.

10.5 Reduced licence fees

10.5.1 The Council encourages the use of cleaner, low emission vehicles as taxis or private hire vehicles and will offer a subsidised licence fee for electric or hybrid vehicles to encourage vehicle owners to consider changing to cleaner fuels.

10.6 Idling

10.6.1 All hackney carriage/taxi and private hire vehicles MUST switch off engines when stationary; NO vehicle is to be idling at any time particularly at taxi ranks, when parked and whilst awaiting/dropping-off passengers. This will have a significant positive environmental impact considering the number of licensed vehicles within Stevenage. All licensed taxis and private hire vehicles are recommended to display an anti-idling sticker provided by the Council inside the front windscreen or on the front dashboard reminding drivers of the need to switch off the engine when stationary.

10.7 Vehicle testing

10.7.1 In order to comply with the Council's vehicle testing requirements a vehicle must obtain a current MOT pass certificate every six (6) months. For newly registered vehicles, the Council requires the MOT to be completed six (6) months after the licence has been issued. For other newly licensed vehicles, a MOT certificate must be provided at application that was undertaken in the recent six (6) months.

10.8 MOT advisories

10.8.1 Any MOT advisory relating to the safety of the vehicle and safety of the driver and passenger(s) must be rectified before a licence is granted. We also reserve the right to extend this requirement to other MOT advisories where we deem it necessary for the protection of the public.

10.9 Vehicle accidents

10.9.1 Any accident involving a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle that causes damage materially affecting:

- the safety, performance or appearance of the vehicle, or
 - the comfort or convenience of the passengers,
- must be reported to the Council as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any case within seventy-two hours of the accident.

10.9.2 With the safety of the public being a predominate consideration of this Policy, all vehicles involved in an accident, however minor, will be required to have a vehicle inspection with a Licensing Officer.

10.9.3 In the case of only cosmetic damage, a timescale for repair will be set by the Council at the end of which the vehicle must be presented to the Licensing Officer. If the repair is not satisfactory to meet the vehicle standards, that vehicle cannot continue to operate as a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle until such time as the vehicle would meet the inspection requirements.

10.9.4 For more major damage, the Council anticipates that the vehicle will be repaired so as to ensure the vehicle is roadworthy and safe. A MOT inspection will be required on the repaired vehicle and a Licensing Officer inspection will be carried out to ensure the vehicle meets the conditions for a licenced vehicle.

10.9.5 The Council may suspend the use of a licensed vehicle until it is suitably repaired and conforms to the Council's conditions.

10.9.6 A licensed vehicle which has suffered major accident damage or requires substantial mechanical repair may be temporarily replaced by a hire vehicle, provided:

- the damage to, or defect in, the vehicle has been reported to the Council,
- an application is made in the prescribed manner for a temporary vehicle licence, and
- the replacement vehicle meets the requirements of this Policy and is suitable to be used for hire purposes.

10.10 Signage

10.10.1 Hackney Carriages must be fitted with an illuminated external sign mounted on or above the roof of the vehicle or have a built-in illuminated roof sign. The sign must display either:

- The word "TAXI"
- The name and/or telephone number of the taxi company
- The words "FOR HIRE", or
- Any combination of the above.

10.10.2 The roof light must be illuminated when available for hire and switched off when the vehicle has been hired.

10.10.3 Internal "FOR HIRE" signs may be fitted in Hackney Carriages but must comply with the requirements above regarding illumination.

10.10.4 Private Hire Vehicles must not carry a roof sign of any description or have any markings that may give the impression that it is a taxi.

10.10.5 Internal "FOR HIRE" signs are not permitted in Private Hire Vehicles.

10.10.6 Private Hire Vehicles must display a Council issued sticker on each side of the vehicle stating that the vehicle is only able to undertake pre-booked journeys.

10.11 Livery

10.11.1 The Council believes that the requirements of this policy ensure that Hackney Carriages/taxis and Private Hire Vehicles can be easily distinguished. There is no current requirement for specific vehicle livery.

10.11.2 However, the Council will keep the issue of livery under review and if it believes that livery would be of benefit to public safety, either in terms of specific vehicle colours and/or a Council logo, then a public consultation will be undertaken prior to any livery being introduced.

10.12 Licence Plates

10.12.1 For the avoidance of doubt a licenced vehicle is always a licenced vehicle including when being used for private purposes.

10.12.2 At all times when a vehicle is licensed as a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle, unless an exception has been granted, the vehicle must display the licence plate provided by the Council, securely fixed externally in a prominent position on or above the rear bumper of the vehicle. Plates attached by magnets must not be removed when the licenced driver is not working at any time, unless when parked overnight outside the driver's home.

10.12.3 At all times when a vehicle is licensed as a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle, the vehicle must display the internal vehicle licence plate provided by the Council, securely fixed to the upper left of the windscreen (passenger side).

10.12.4 The licence plates must be always clearly identifiable and legible to the public.

10.12.5 For the avoidance of doubt, vehicles that are used for a combination of 'exempt' work and normal private hire work will be required to always display external licence plates when the exemption does not apply.

10.12.6 Exemption to the requirements of subsection 10.12.2 may be given to private hire vehicles used for executive hire, corporate contracts, or work of a similar nature. To qualify for exemption:

- a written letter of exemption issued by the Council must always be carried in the vehicle,
- the licence plate must always be carried in the vehicle, and
- the vehicle must be undertaking the nature of work for which the exemption was granted.

10.13 Advertising

10.13.1 No more than five (5) external advertisements shall be permitted on taxis or private hire vehicles.

10.13.2 External advertisements shall be confined to the door panels or the rear of the vehicle and must be restricted to the name, logo or insignia, telephone number, social media or other contact details of the owner or operator of the vehicle.

10.13.3 No advertisement shall obliterate, obscure or be confused with the vehicle's Licence Plate.

10.13.4 Internal advertisements are permitted on the windscreen or rear window but must be:

- no more than ten (10) centimetres in height,
- positioned so that they do not obstruct the driver's view in any way, and
- be restricted to the name, logo or insignia, telephone number, or other contact details of the owner or operator of the vehicle.

10.13.5 The display of 'no smoking' signage as required by legislation and/or signage indicating that the vehicle can convey passengers in wheelchairs is not considered to be advertising.

10.13.6 All advertisements shall be in good taste and contain no material that may be considered to be offensive to any section of the community.

10.13.7 The owner of any vehicle displaying an advertisement that does not conform to this section of the policy will be required to remove the offending advertisement. Until such time as the offending advertisement has been removed; the vehicle licence will be suspended.

10.14 Tyres

10.14.1 The licensed vehicle must be fitted with tyres suitable for the vehicle. All tyres, including the spare wheel, must be suitable for use on the vehicle and conform to the requirements of the Original Manufacturers' Specification.

10.14.2 If a 'space-saver' spare tyre is used on a licensed vehicle it must only be for completing the current fare and returning to a garage to obtain a suitable full-size replacement. No further fares may be taken whilst the 'space-saver' spare tyre is being used on the vehicle.

10.14.3 Original Manufacturers' Specification 'tyre repair kits/compressor' are permitted within licensed vehicles provided they comply with the relevant British Standards and have not date expired. If a 'tyre repair kit/compressor' is used on a licensed vehicle in lieu of a spare tyre it must only be for the duration of completing the current fare and returning to a garage to obtain a suitable tyre replacement. No further fares may be taken whilst the tyre repaired with the 'tyre repair kit/ compressor' is being used on the vehicle.

10.15 Vehicle dual plating

10.15.1 The Council will not grant a taxi or private hire vehicle licence for any vehicle already licensed by another licensing authority.

10.16 Communication Devices

10.16.1 All two-way radio equipment must be of a type currently approved by, and fitted securely in accordance with guidelines published by, the Radio Communications Agency.

10.16.2 The use of radio scanning devices is prohibited, and such devices must not be fitted or carried in the vehicle.

10.17 Card Machines

10.17.1 By 1 July 2024 all licensed hackney carriages/taxis and private hire vehicles must be fitted with a credit or debit card reader to enable passengers the option to pay by credit or debit card. The card reader/device must be capable of providing the option to the passenger to supply an email address or alternative communication for a receipt or capable of printing a receipt. All passengers should be provided with a receipt unless they advise the driver that they do not require one. An exemption will apply to vehicles that undertake contract work only.

10.17.2 Should a passenger wish to pay by cash the driver must ask the passenger if they require a receipt. If the passenger requires a receipt, the driver must provide one which accurately states the time and date, driver number, journey detail and fare. All receipts must be produced on carbon paper. The driver is to retain all receipts given and produce to a licencing officer upon request. Failure to produce a receipt upon request could see the driver liable to enforcement action being taken.

10.17.3 Licence holders are reminded that they are data handlers when dealing with personal information such as names, addresses, emails addresses and telephone numbers and must comply with the requirements of data protection regulations and GDPR. Breaches of data protection regulations may impact on the ability to hold a licence with the Council.

10.18 CCTV systems

10.18.1 Stevenage Borough Council is very aware that drivers of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, being lone workers, are vulnerable to unlawful acts whilst providing a service to the public and can offer reassurance to the travelling customer.

10.18.2 As such, the Council actively supports the installation of approved CCTV systems in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles. In some circumstances, the installation of a CCTV system is a condition of licence. Any CCTV systems installed in a licenced vehicle must fully comply with the minimum requirements. The system shall, as a minimum:

- Meet the current Information Commissioner data protection requirements.
- Be capable of date and time system identification stamping.
- Be capable of recording and storing images for a minimum period of seven days.
- Be capable of capturing images that, in low light conditions, must be of sufficient quality to enable identification of any person travelling in the vehicle and be of such quality that they can be used for prosecution purposes.
- Be capable of storing images in a manner, which prevents them being removed, downloaded, or viewed by the driver or any other person travelling in the vehicle.
- Provide that images are only capable of being downloaded by a system administrator.
- Provide that images are digitally encrypted. De-encryption software required to view the recorded images must be supplied to the Council free of charge before the system is installed in the vehicle.
- Provide that the hard disk or data card is not able to be accessed by the driver or any other person travelling in the vehicle.
- Provide that the data unit is stored separately from the camera(s) and out of view of person travelling in the vehicle.
- Provide that cameras are capable of being fitted in locations that do not affect the safety of any person travelling in the vehicle and located as securely and discreetly as possible to avoid passengers travelling in the vehicle from tampering with them.
- Provide that, where the system uses a DVD recorder, the system is protected from shock.

10.18.3 No audio, video or recording systems shall be installed or operated in the vehicle without prior written notification being supplied to the council.

10.18.4 CCTV must be clearly indicated to the passenger by signs in the vehicle that includes contact details for the system manager/operator.

10.19 Hackney Carriage Meters

10.19.1 All licensed hackney carriages must comply with the following requirements. An approved calendar taximeter must be fitted in all hackney carriages and must be correctly calibrated, sealed and fully functional in accordance with the current Council approved fare structure,

- must be appropriately stamped to ensure compliance with The Measuring Instruments (Taximeters) Regulations 2006, or any subsequent legislation,
- must not be capable of being manually overridden to ensure that the correct tariff is charged based on the actual date and time of the journey, and
- must be set at the correct date and time at all times throughout the period of the vehicle licence.

10.19.2 The taximeter shall be positioned so that the display on the face of the meter is clearly visible to any person being conveyed in the vehicle at all

times. The display of the taximeter shall be kept properly illuminated throughout any part of the hiring including during the hours of darkness, and also at any time at the request of the hirer.

10.19.3 When the meter is operating there shall be recorded on the face of the meter in clearly legible figures a fare not exceeding the maximum fare that may be charged for a journey.

10.19.4 An official copy of the current fare tariff shall be clearly displayed and legible in the vehicle so as to be plainly visible to passengers carried therein.

10.19.5 The vehicle taximeter shall be brought into operation at the commencement of the journey and the fare demanded by the driver shall not be greater than that fixed by the Council in connection with the fare tariff for the hire of hackney carriages. The taximeter should not be started until the passenger is in the vehicle ready to commence the journey.

10.19.6 In the event of such a journey commencing in, but ending outside, the Borough, the driver may charge for the journey such fare as was agreed before the hiring was affected. If no such agreement was made then the fare to be charged should be no greater than that fixed by the Council in connection with the fare tariff for the hire of hackney carriages.

10.20 Private Hire Meters/Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)

10.20.1 Private hire vehicles are not required to be fitted with a taximeter, however, where a taximeter or other device for recording fares is fitted, it must be of a type approved by the Council.

10.20.2 Private hire operators must agree the cost of the journey with the passenger(s) prior to undertaking the journey. At the conclusion of the journey, the fare charged should not exceed the amount previously agreed. If the operator intends to use the taximeter to calculate the fare, they must seek agreement from the passenger(s) at the time of accepting the booking, including the agreed point at which the meter would be engaged.

10.20.3 The use of a PDA or smart phone communication/mapping devices is permitted however any device must be fitted where all passengers have an unobstructed view while not being in a position to distract the driver.

10.20.4 Should the PDA/smart phone display a fare this must be calibrated in accordance with the approved Council fare tariff and always match the display on the fitted meter.

10.20.5 For private hire vehicles, the pre-agreed fare should be displayed on the PDA/smart phone device.

10.20.6 Should the private hire vehicle be fitted with a meter and the customer requests that the journey is made using the meter, the driver must remove the previously agreed fare displayed on the PDA/smart phone and comply with section 10.20.2.

10.20.7 PDAs must not be used to calculate the fare for any journey undertaken in a Hackney Carriage/taxi.

10.21 Disability access

10.21.1 The Council strongly supports a greater number of wheelchair accessible vehicles within the licensed fleet; both hackney carriage/taxi and private hire vehicles.

10.21.2 In the case of all licensed vehicles which are built or adapted for disabled passengers, the design of the vehicle should ordinarily ensure that any wheelchair is loaded from the side rather than the rear of the vehicle. Whilst the Council prefer vehicles to be loaded from the side it is aware that rear-loading vehicles better suit certain types of motorised wheelchair, therefore each vehicle will be assessed on its own merits.

10.21.3 Where a vehicle is utilised for the carriage of passengers in a wheelchair, the following conditions shall apply:

- access to and exit from the wheelchair position must not be obstructed in any manner at any time except by wheelchair loading apparatus,
- internal wheelchair anchorage must be of the manufacturer's design and construction and secured in such a position as not to obstruct any emergency exit,
- a suitable restraint must be available for the occupant of a wheelchair.
- access ramps or lifts to the vehicle must be securely fixed prior to use, and be able to support the wheelchair, occupant, and helper,
- ramps and lifts must be securely stored in the vehicle before it may move off
- access ramps and/or lifts must be maintained in full working order at all times when the vehicle is available for hire.

10.21.4 Any equipment fitted to the vehicle for the purpose of lifting a wheelchair into the vehicle must have been tested in accordance with the requirements of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (S.I. 1998/2307).

10.21.5 Where a vehicle is designed or adapted to carry a wheelchair, the proprietor shall ensure that the driver has received sufficient training to safely load and convey wheelchair bound passengers.

10.21.6 At any time when a wheelchair accessible vehicle is unable to carry passengers in a wheelchair or with other disabilities, either due to a mechanical fault or driver incapacity, the vehicle will automatically be suspended and should not be used to carry passengers until full wheelchair and other disability access is available.

10.22 Insurance

10.22.1 The proprietor and named drivers must have a policy of insurance, or such security as complies with the requirements of Part VI of the Road Traffic

Act 1972, throughout the duration of the vehicle licence, including appropriate cover for hackney carriage or private hire.

10.22.2 Certificates of Insurance or cover notes that do not provide appropriate cover for a minimum of the first calendar month of a licence period will not be accepted by us. The Council will not issue a licence in the event of failure to meet the insurance requirement.

10.22.3 Where a cover note is provided as part of a licence application, a full Certificate of Insurance must be provided prior to the expiry of the cover note.

10.22.4 The registered owner of the licensed vehicle shall ensure that it is insured to the Council's satisfaction. This must comply with all relevant legislation at all times, that is the vehicle is available for the carrying of passengers. In the absence of appropriate insurance, the licensed vehicle cannot be used for the carrying of passengers.

10.22.5 Only appropriately licensed hackney carriage/taxi or private hire drivers may drive the vehicle. The Council will not, therefore, accept any Certificate of Insurance that includes persons that do not hold a valid hackney carriage or private hire driver licence for the vehicle.

10.23 Unauthorised Use

10.23.1 The proprietor of a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle shall not allow the vehicle to be driven and/or used for hire by any person who does not hold an appropriate current hackney carriage/taxi or private hire driver licence issued by the Council.

11. Private Hire Operators

11.1 Central to the private hire industry, operators are an essential part of the private hire vehicle regulatory system under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Vehicles and drivers may only lawfully carry out bookings made through an operator who is licensed by the same authority, and the location of the operator's office will determine the authority from which all other licences must be obtained.

11.2 Operators play a central role in ensuring that the public are kept safe; drivers are competent to deliver the best service and that vehicles are kept in a clean, safe and sound condition at all times.

11.3 Although operators are not as customer-facing with the public as drivers, their duties in ensuring the safety of the public means that the Council must apply similar checks when considering applications for licences. The Council must be satisfied that current and prospective operators are fit and proper persons.

11.4 A private hire operator licence issued by the Council will be required for any operator with an operating base that is inside the Stevenage borough boundary. As such, all vehicles and drivers operating from that base will require appropriate licences issued by the Council. This is to ensure that

proper regulation and enforcement measures may be taken and that all vehicles operating within Stevenage meet the Council's Policy objectives.

11.1 Operator's applications

11.1.1 Operators can be an individual, a partnership or a limited company. The completed application must be made by all relevant persons; this is particularly relevant regarding suitability and right to licence. All applicants applying as an operator must undertake the right to licence checks and demonstrate their suitability. Where a limited company is applying for a licence, the questions should be answered in respect of both the company and its directors. This is particularly relevant to the questions relating to conviction, cautions, insolvency, or disqualification, because the Council must be satisfied as to the fitness and propriety of every applicant.

11.1.2 A basic Disclosure and Barring Service certificate for each applicant is required. This means that a certificate must be obtained and supplied in respect of the sole individual applicant, or each individual applicant where the application is made by multiple individuals, or each director of a limited company application. Certificates must be issued in the full name of the relevant individual and must have been issued no earlier than three (3) months before the date on which the application is made.

11.1.3 Applicants are required to be registered with the DBS update service.

11.1.4 A driver licenced by the Council but also acting as an operator will not be required to demonstrate these tests as they have already undergone right to licence and suitability checks to attain a driver's licence.

11.1.5 Requests will be sent to the police to obtain any information that may be relevant when determining an application.

11.1.6 When all required information has been received, the application will be determined.

11.1.7 Licences will usually be granted for a period of five (5) years. However, the Council can grant licences for a shorter duration, should this be requested.

11.1.8 Operator's licences are non-transferrable. Should a licensed business be sold or passed on to a different person, the new owner of the business will need to apply for a licence. Additionally, an operator's licenced address is not transferable and will require an operator to apply for a new licence where this arises.

11.1.9 Section 62 of the 1976 Act provides a power for the Council to suspend or revoke an operator's licence on various grounds, including:

- the commission of an offence or non-compliance with the 1976 Act,
- conduct on the part of the operator which appears to render him unfit,
- any material changes in the operator's circumstances, or

- any other reasonable cause.

11.1.10 The Council has the power to prosecute an operator for breaches, including failure to keep the prescribed records, or operation of unlicensed vehicles or drivers where evidential and public interest tests are successfully applied.

11.1.11 If an application is refused, or a licence suspended or revoked, or an operator is aggrieved by conditions added to their licence, a right of appeal to the Magistrates' Court exists. Details of how to exercise this right will be provided in the Council's correspondence with the operator at the time of the decision.

11.1.12 Upon renewal, applicants must provide

- DBS check
- Right to licence check

11.2 Operating Name

11.2.1 Operators will be asked to declare their (proposed) trading name(s) within their application. This is the name by which the business will typically be known by customers and the public, and which will appear on advertising placed by the Operator. Any proposed trading name will be authorised where the name does not offend or be discriminatory in any way to any person.

11.3 Fitness and Propriety of applicants

11.3.1 Operators must meet the fit and proper test in accordance with Appendix 2.

11.3.2 A 'person' may apply to both individuals and bodies corporate and unincorporated. A company or partnership may apply for a private hire vehicle operator's licence. The Council will apply the 'fit and proper' test to each of the directors or partners in that company or partnership. Therefore, private hire vehicle operators will be required to tell the Council of any change in directors or partners.

11.4 Disclosure of convictions

11.4.1 Operators are required to inform the Council in writing within forty-eight (48) hours if they are arrested, formally interviewed as a suspect, or charged with an offence by the Police.

11.4.2 The operator shall, within seven (7) days of conviction, notify us in writing of any conviction or fixed penalty imposed during the period of duration of the operator licence. If the operator is a company or partnership, this requirement shall equally apply if any of the directors or partners receives a conviction or fixed penalty.

11.5 Booking and Dispatch operators

11.5.1 Operators are required to keep a register of all staff that will take bookings or dispatch vehicles. Operators must ensure that all persons that have access to their records, bookings and contracts have:

- A basic disclosure check and completes a statutory declaration in relation to previous offences before commencing employment; and
- A new basic Disclosure at the time when the operator's licence is renewed.

11.5.2 Booking and dispatch staff engaged by the Operator must satisfy the suitability standards as set out in Appendix 1. The Operator is required to keep records of their checks and demonstrate that they have applied the Council's Suitability Policy, where necessary. An Operator is not required to keep a copy of the certificate.

11.5.3 Should a booking or dispatch operator leave or be temporarily employed, should they be engaged again by the Operator at a later date, a new standard Disclosure Certificate is required for the Operator to fulfil their obligations.

11.6 Records

11.6.1 The operator shall keep a record of every booking of a private hire vehicle invited or accepted on behalf of the operator. The Operator shall also keep a record of any vehicle operated by them, all licensed drivers engaged/employed to drive any vehicle operated by them and such record must be maintained.

11.6.2 The register and records for the operator's bookings referred to in Private Hire Operator conditions at Appendix 6, can be kept in either paper format or electronically. The chosen format should permit inspection with the minimum of delay, and in any case within 24 hours, in response to a request made under section 56(3) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Records kept in electronic format must be made available in a suitable, agreed format to an authorised officer of the authority or a Police Officer within 24 hours.

11.6.3 All records must be kept for a period no shorter than twelve (12) months.

11.7 Operator conditions

11.7.1 The Council may attach conditions to an operator's licence. Standard conditions have been devised and will be attached to all licences. These conditions are set out in Appendix 5.

11.7.2 On occasions the Council may attach additional conditions or alter conditions in response to a specific issue raised in the application. The Council may therefore add/substitute/alter conditions as appropriate.

11.8 Contracting out accepted private hire bookings

11.8.1 Legislation allows for a licensed private hire operator to sub-contract a booking to another licensed private hire operator, either inside the same local authority area or in a different one. Both operators must be licensed within the area in which their operating base is located and should record details of the booking in the normal way.

11.8.2 All three licences (operator, driver and vehicle) must still be issued by the same local authority. For example, an operator licensed to operate in district A and district B cannot take a booking in district A and use a vehicle and driver licensed in district B. They can however sub-contract the booking to the operating base in district B using a vehicle and driver licensed in district B.

11.8.3 The initial booking must be taken within the area in which the operator is based, and the sub-contracted booking must be taken within the area in which the subcontracted operator is based.

11.9 Complaints against the operator

11.9.1 The operator is not obligated to advise the Council of complaints received. However, it is recommended that complaints that give rise to a significant issue are notified to the Council with a view to provide advice and direction as necessary

11.9.2 A complainant will usually involve the Council where the operator has not communicated effectively with the complainant. It is recommended that when a complaint is received, an investigation is undertaken to determine whether the complaint is valid. You should revert to the complainant with the outcome of your investigation.

12 Other matters

12.1 Licensing of Stretch Limousines

12.1.1 Every application to licence a stretched limousine as a private hire vehicle will be considered on its individual merits.

12.1.2 Imported stretched limousine type vehicles may

- be granted an exemption from the requirement, under the conditions of licence for private hire vehicles, for the vehicle to be right hand drive
- be granted an exemption from the requirement to display external licence plates and door signs
- be approved for licensing as private hire vehicles subject to the additional conditions detailed in Appendix 6.

Appendix 1 - Suitability Policy

A1.1 This policy provides guidance to all parties on the criteria that will be taken into account when determining whether an applicant or an existing licence holder is a fit and proper person to hold a driver's licence, an Operator Licence or to be the proprietor of a licensed vehicle.

A1.2 When the Council makes any decisions or takes any actions in line with this policy, the safety of the public will be its paramount concern.

A1.3 An applicant's criminal convictions record plays a significant part in the Council's determination on whether an individual is fit and proper. If a court has found an applicant guilty of an offence, that person cannot subsequently claim to the Council that they did not commit the offence. If they seek to do so, their representation will not be considered as this is entirely a matter for the courts. The applicant can, however, offer any mitigating circumstances relating to the offence that they wish the Council to consider.

A1.4 The Council considers Fixed Penalty Notices issued and accepted by a person as a conviction.

A1.2 History

A1.2.1 The Council may take into account an applicant's history as a licence holder with this, or any other, Council. In considering whether a person is 'fit and proper', the Council may consider such matters as the applicant's complaint history, their compliance with this policy, their co-operation with licensing officers' requests, and any other reasonable matters.

A1.3 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

A1.3.1 The Act supports the rehabilitation into employment of reformed offenders who have stayed on the right side of the law. Cautions and convictions (except those resulting in prison sentences of over four years and all public protection sentences) may become spent.

A1.3.2 The Act does not apply to applicants for hackney carriages/taxi and private hire drivers' licences, hence cautions and convictions do not become 'spent'. Requesting a licence to drive a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle requires the applicant to disclose

- Unspent cautions and convictions
- Unprotected spent cautions and convictions

A1.4 DVLA penalty points

A1.4.1 Licensed drivers should provide a professional service to the public and must be aware of the safety of passengers and other road users at all times. Any traffic offence shows a lack of responsibility whilst driving either in terms of vehicle maintenance or the level of driving standards.

A1.4.2 Convictions or cautions for traffic offences will not automatically prevent an applicant from obtaining a licence, however, the number, nature and frequency of such offences will be considered. Where there is a significant history of driving offences, an application is likely to be refused.

A1.4.3 In cases of up to seven (7) unspent penalty points on an applicant's DVLA driving licence, an application may be granted depending on the nature of the offences and the frequency. A licence granted under these circumstances is likely to be issued together with a written warning as to future driving standards detailing the likely effect of further offences.

A1.4.4 In cases of eight (8) or more unspent penalty points on an applicant's DVLA driving licence, an application will be refused.

A1.5 Major Traffic Offences

A1.5.1 The Council considers major traffic offences to include, but is not limited to:

- dangerous driving,
- driving whilst disqualified,
- failure to stop after an accident,
- driving without valid insurance,
- careless driving, and
- driving a vehicle with mechanical defectives (such as brakes, steering, tyres, etc.)

A1.5.2 If the driver applicant has been convicted of one major traffic offence, a licence application will normally be refused until the applicant has completed a period of at least three (3) years free from conviction. An existing driver will have their licence revoked.

A1.5.3 Where the driver applicant has been convicted of more than one major traffic offence then a licence application will normally be refused until the applicant has completed a period of at least six (6) years free from conviction. Where the combination of offences is of increased risk to the public, a period

longer than six (6) years may be substituted by the Council dependant on the extent of the risk to the public. An existing driver will have their licence revoked.

A1.5.4 If the driver applicant or existing driver has received a driving conviction that has led to a disqualification, a minimum period of 5 years must be demonstrated that is conviction-free prior to receiving a driver's licence. An applicant that has more than one disqualification conviction will ordinarily be refused a driver's licence, or their licence revoked as applicable.

A1.5.5 Disqualifications due to the 'totting up' procedure, the Council will require a period of twelve (12) months free of relevant convictions before an application is considered. If the applicant has demonstrated to the court exceptional hardship through the 'totting up' procedure and avoided a driving disqualification, applications will still normally be refused until there has been a period of twelve (12) months free of relevant convictions. The Council believe that the risk to the public is sufficient to maintain this consistent stance.

A1.5.6 Driver applicants or existing drivers found guilty of being in charge of a vehicle without insurance upon conviction will be unable to obtain a licence until a period of 5 years has elapsed since the conviction or court applied penalty (prison sentence, on licence or community service) has expired. An existing driver will have their licence revoked. Further insurance offences proven by conviction will ordinarily lead the Council to refuse an application.

A1.5.7 Private hire operators guilty of aiding or abetting the driving of persons without insurance, upon conviction, will have their operator's licence revoked and will be unable to re-apply until a conviction free period of three (3) years has passed following the expiry of a court applied penalty.

A1.5.8 Major traffic offences resulting in death caused by

- dangerous driving,
 - careless driving,
 - driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or
 - driving unlicensed, disqualified, or uninsured,
- due to their nature, will be considered by the Council to be an unacceptable risk to public safety and an application will be refused.

A1.5.9 Where an applicant/driver licence holder has been disqualified from driving by the courts under the "totting up" procedure, the Council will normally refuse an application/ revoke the licence until there has been a period of twelve (12) months free of relevant convictions. If the applicant has demonstrated to the court "exceptional hardship" and avoided a driving disqualification, applications will still normally be refused until there has been a period of twelve (12) months

free of relevant convictions. The Council believe that the risk to the public is sufficient to maintain this consistent stance.

A1.6 Drug Offences

A1.6.1 The Council considers all offences related to controlled substances as a serious risk to the public. A conviction can be applied to a person who takes, carries, makes drugs or sells, deals, or shares drugs (supplies them).

A1.6.2 Possession offences

An applicant with one conviction for possession of a Class A drug related offence will be required to show a period of ten (10) years free of convictions following the expiry of a court applied penalty before an application is considered. Existing operators and dual drivers will have their licences revoked.

A1.6.3 An applicant with a conviction for possession of a Class B drug related offence will be required to show a period of seven (7) years free of convictions following the expiry of a court applied penalty before an application is considered. Existing operators and dual drivers will have their licences revoked.

A1.6.4 An applicant with a conviction for possession of a Class C drug related offence will be required to show a period of at least three (3) years free of convictions following the expiry of a court applied penalty before an application is considered. Existing operators and dual drivers will have their licences revoked.

A1.6.5 Supply or production offences

The Council views the supply and production of illegal substances as a significant risk to the safety of the public for all persons involved in the licenced hackney carriage/taxi or private hire trade. Convictions for drug offences relating to supply or production will ordinarily lead the application to be refused and existing licences to be revoked.

A1.6.6 If an individual has previously been addicted to alcohol or drugs, an application will be impeded until the applicant can show evidence of being at least five (5) years free from addiction following the completion of a recognised detoxification programme.

A1.7 Violence Offences

A1.7.1 The Council considers all violence related offences as a serious risk to the public; offences of criminal damage and public order will be treated as violent offences for the purposes of this policy.

A1.7.2 An application will be refused where the applicant has been convicted of:

- murder or attempted murder,
- manslaughter,
- any offence involving the possession of a firearm,
- any terrorism-related offence,
- racially aggravated grievous bodily harm or malicious wounding, or
- aggravated burglary.

A1.7.3 An application will be refused where the applicant has been convicted of:

- arson,
- possession of an offensive weapon,
- any racially aggravated offence (other than those listed above),
- any offence that may be categorised as domestic violence,
- violent disorder or riot, or
- assault of an Officer of the Law

unless there has been a period of ten (10) years free of conviction following the expiry of a court appointed penalty. Existing licence holders will have their licences revoked.

A1.8 Sexual, Indecency and Sexual Exploitation Offences

A1.8.1 As hackney carriage/taxi and private hire drivers often carry unaccompanied and/or vulnerable people, any applicant with a conviction or caution for any sexual, indecency or sexual exploitation offence will normally be refused a licence.

A1.8.2 The Council will not grant a licence to any applicant that is currently on the Sex Offenders Register or on any barred list.

A1.9 Criminal Exploitation Offences

A1.9.1 Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines activity. County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons.

A1.9.2 For the purposes of this policy, convictions relating to drugs, violence and sexual offences are dealt with in other areas of this policy. Modern slavery, offensive weapons, firearms and inchoate offences (intentionally encouraging or assisting an offence, encouraging or assisting an offence believing it will be

committed; and encouraging or assisting offences believing one or more will be committed) are a serious risk to public safety.

A1.9.3 Applicants and existing licence holders with a conviction for offences relating to criminal exploitation will be refused/revoked from holding a licence.

A1.10 Discrimination Offences

A1.10.1 Hackney carriage/taxi and private hire drivers and operators have close contact with the public. As such convictions for discrimination (including hate crimes) are regarded as serious when deciding whether the applicant is fit and proper.

A1.10.2 It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of

- age
- being or becoming a transsexual person
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

A1.10.3 Hate crime is any crime that is perceived as having been motivated (entirely or partially) by a hostility to or prejudice against a personal characteristic or perceived personal characteristic. This includes any offence that involves unlawful discrimination as an aggravating factor. Hate crime refers to offences relating to disability, gender-identity, race, religion/faith, and sexual orientation.

A1.10.4 Crimes based on hostility to age, gender or appearance can also be hate crimes. Hate crime can take many forms including but not limited to

- physical attacks such as assault, grievous bodily harm and murder, damage to property, offensive graffiti and arson
- threat of attack including offensive letters, abusive or obscene telephone calls, groups hanging around to intimidate, and unfounded, malicious complaints, and
- verbal abuse, insults or harassment – taunting, offensive leaflets and posters, abusive gestures, dumping of rubbish outside homes or through letterboxes, and bullying at school or in the workplace.

A1.10.5 If an applicant/licence holder has been convicted for any discrimination offence, the application will normally be refused until seven (7) years have elapsed following the expiry of a court applied penalty. Existing operators and dual drivers will have their licences revoked.

A1.10.6 Where the applicant for an operator's licence is a company or partnership, a conviction for discrimination against any partner, director or secretary of that body will be considered in the same way as it would be for an individual and the licence will be revoked.

A1.11 Dishonesty Offences

A1.11.1 Hackney carriage/taxi and private hire drivers are expected to be persons of trust; in this position, dishonest drivers can defraud the public. This might be seen as routinely giving the wrong change or charging more than the legal or agreed fare. As such, persons who are vulnerable can be confused by the driver and accept their stance. A customer can be defrauded by a driver taking them by any other than the shortest route or by them retaining lost property left in the vehicle. Members of the public entrust themselves to the care of licensed drivers, hence the Council considers offences involving dishonesty as a serious risk to public safety.

A1.11.2 An applicant/existing licence holder that has been convicted of an offence related to dishonesty will normally be refused a licence until such time as they have been free of convictions for seven (7) years following the expiry of a court applied penalty. Existing operators and dual drivers will have their licences revoked.

A1.12 Other Offences

A1.12.1 Offences relating to breaches of taxi licensing legislation for illegal plying for hire, overcharging and refusal to carry a person with a disability or assistance dog will normally be refused a licence until such time as they have been free of convictions for three (3) years following the expiry of a court applied penalty. Existing operators and dual drivers will have their licences revoked.

A1.12.2 Insurance offences and, in particular, those relating to driving or being in charge of a vehicle without insurance, will normally be refused a licence until such time as they have been free of convictions for five (5) years following the expiry of a court applied penalty. Existing operators and dual drivers will have their licences revoked.

A1.12.3 Operator found guilty of aiding and abetting, or otherwise assisting the driving of passengers whilst without insurance will have his Operator's Licence

revoked immediately and will not be permitted to hold a licence for a period of at least three years.

A1.12.4 An applicant subject to an outstanding charge or summons will be retained on hold until the matter is resolved. Fitness and propriety of existing licence holder will be considered with the seriousness of matter leading to the charge or summons in reference to the categories contained within this policy.

A1.13 In Summary

A1.13.1 Except for the most serious of circumstances, an applicant having a previous or current conviction will not normally be permanently prevented from obtaining a licence.

A1.13.2 The Council believe that a person convicted of an offence, who is required to wait for the expiry of a rehabilitation period prior to their application being considered, is more likely to value their licence and ensure that future convictions are avoided.

A1.13.3 The Council considers that there are, however, certain offences that are so serious in nature or frequency that an applicant should be prevented from obtaining or retaining a licence. The Council's over-riding policy objective is to safeguard the safety of the general public by ensuring that all licensed persons are fit and proper, competent and are able to maintain their vehicles to an acceptable standard at all times.

A1.13.4 By producing clear and transparent guidelines on the relevance of convictions, the Council is seeking to maintain the high standard of taxi and private hire drivers, proprietors and operators within Stevenage.

Appendix 2 - Definition of 'fit and proper'

A2.1 The legislation requires the Council to grant a licence only if it is satisfied that the applicant is a 'fit and proper' person. This Appendix details the definition of fit and proper used by the Council and other factors the Council will consider as part of this determination. Compliance with this policy is an integral part of the fit and proper person test.

A2.2 At the time of an application, **the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that they meet this requirement, not on the Council to demonstrate that the applicant does not.**

A2.3 When considering disciplinary or enforcement action, **the onus is on the Council to demonstrate that the licence holder no longer meets this requirement.**

A2.4 Definition of 'fit and proper'

In the absence of a judicially approved definition of "fit and proper", the Council use the test of:

Would the Officer charged with the ability to grant a licence allow their son, daughter, spouse or partner, mother, father, grandson, granddaughter, or any other person for whom they care, to get into a licensed vehicle with the applicant alone?

A2.5 The wording of this test originates from Mr J T H Button BA, Solicitor, MIL, MCI Arb, a well-known and respected solicitor widely acknowledged as an authority in licensing legislation, particularly that of taxis and private hire and has generally been accepted by the Courts.

A2.6 The Council also considers further factors in determining whether applicants are fit and proper. The factors include safe drivers with a good driving records, being mentally and physically fit, being honest, and being persons who would not take advantage of their position to abuse, assault or defraud members of the public.

A2.7 Drivers in the course of their duties will carry vulnerable members of the public such as elderly persons, unaccompanied children, disabled persons, persons who are incapacitated from alcohol or medical conditions, lone persons and foreign visitors. Some examples of areas of concern that the Council will consider include, but are not limited to:

- **Honesty and trustworthiness**

Drivers often have knowledge that a customer is leaving a property empty; they are transporting drunken, vulnerable, or foreign persons. For example, all passengers would expect to be charged the correct fare for the journey and be

given the correct change; they would expect any lost property to be handed over to the police; and they would expect confidentiality to be maintained between themselves and the driver. The public deem licenced drivers trustworthy.

- **Professionalism**

Drivers can be subject to unpleasant, abusive, or dishonest behaviour, albeit from a small minority of passengers. Although this is clearly unacceptable behaviour, the Council expects drivers to always remain professional and unacceptable behaviour by passengers does not excuse in any way aggressive or abusive conduct by drivers. Drivers should not confront passengers and all disputes should be resolved through the formal legal channels. Under no circumstances must drivers take the law into their own hands.

- **Good and safe driving ability**

Passengers are paying for a service whereby they expect to reach their chosen destination promptly and safely. Drivers must be fully conversant with all road traffic legislation and this policy and drive in a professional, lawful and safe manner at all times.

Appendix 3 - Enforcement of this policy

A3.1 The Council acts as a Licensing Authority to ensure public safety. It is the Council's duty to ensure persons engaged in the hackney carriage/taxi and private hire provision in Stevenage meet the requirements of the applicable legislation and this policy. As such, the Council has the power to enforce for non-compliance.

A3.2 The Council recognises that well-directed enforcement activity by them benefits not only the public but also the responsible members of the taxi and private hire vehicle trade and will operate a proportionate disciplinary and enforcement regime.

A3.3 Principally, enforcement action will be based upon the seriousness of the breach and the possible consequences arising from it. Enforcement action will not normally, therefore, constitute a punitive response to minor technical contraventions of legislation. Repeated minor technical contraventions, however, will be subject to appropriate action.

A3.4 Enforcement action must always be consistent, proportionate and reasonable whilst ensuring that the public receive adequate protection. Determination of enforcement action may consider, but will not be limited to:

- seriousness of any offence(s)
- driver's or operator's past history
- consequence of non-compliance
- likely effectiveness of the various enforcement options
- risk to the public.

A3.5 The Council will ensure that its enforcement is reasonable, transparent, and proportionate and, notwithstanding this policy, the Council will consider the General Enforcement Policy (Environmental Health & Licensing).

A3.6 Reports of offences or breaches of this policy from any other licensing authority or enforcement body, such as the police or civil enforcement officers, will be considered by the Council. Where acceptable evidence from these authorities or bodies is received, it will be given appropriate weight as though the evidence was provided by a Council licensing officer.

A3.7 The Council will use a range of enforcement to ensure persons engaged in the hackney carriage/taxi and private hire provision in Stevenage meet the requirements of the applicable legislation and this policy.

A3.8 The range of enforcement options are

- Informal action (including the use of penalty points scheme)
- Suspension
- Revocation
- Section 68 (stop) notices
- Refusal to renew

- Simple caution
- Prosecution

A3.9 Informal advice

A3.9.1 Informal action to secure compliance includes offering advice, written warnings, and the issuing of penalty points.

A3.9.2 Informal enforcement action may be appropriate in, but not limited to, some or all of the following scenarios:

- the act or omission is not serious enough to warrant formal action
- it can reasonably be expected that informal action will achieve future compliance
- confidence in the driver or operator is ordinarily high
- a non-compliance (with the law) was identified that was not an actual significant risk to public safety, or
- the consequences of non-compliance (of conditions) will not pose a significant risk to public safety.

A3.9.3 The penalty points scheme is designed to act as an awareness system to licence holders who do not meet the Council's required standards and to be an appropriate tool in a graduated enforcement approach, where appropriate.

A3.9.4 The penalty points scheme does not prevent the Council from enforcing breaches of law or the Council's Policy via prosecution, should an offence meet the public interest and evidential tests.

A3.9.5 The penalty points scheme will be applied as described in Appendix 3A.

A3.10 Suspension

A3.10.1 Vehicles: Compliance with the vehicle specification and conditions of this policy is essential and will be enforced by periodic, random vehicle inspections by the Council. Should any vehicle not be properly maintained, a notice will be served on the driver/licence holder setting out the defect(s) and the required action. If there is a risk to public safety, the further use of the vehicle will be suspended until the defects have been remedied and confirmatory documents inspected by a licensing officer.

A3.10.2 Drivers: The Council may exercise its discretion to suspend the operation of a driver's licence for a specified period. Ordinarily, such action will be taken where informal action is deemed inappropriate and formal legal action is not warranted or appropriate.

A3.10.3 Any suspension is held pending the period for appeal expiring or, in the case of an appeal, the appeal being determined. Where necessary for public safety, the Licensing Officer may determine that a suspension takes immediate effect and is not held pending an appeal.

A3.11 Revocation

A3.11.1 All revocations are issued by the Commercial & Licensing Manager, or in their absence, the Senior Environmental Health & Licensing Manager.

A3.11.2 Where a licence holder has been referred to the Commercial & Licensing Manager because they have:

- committed a criminal offence
- have accumulated twelve (12) or more penalty points issued under Appendix 3A
- no longer meet the 'fit and proper' test set out in Appendix 2; or
- for any other reason whereby the policy objectives would not be met, the Commercial & Licensing Manager may revoke the licence.

A3.11.3 Any revocation is paused pending the period for appeal expiring or, in the case of an appeal, the appeal being determined. Where necessary for public safety, the Commercial & Licensing Manager may determine that a revocation takes immediate effect and is not held pending an appeal.

A3.12 Section 68 (Stop) Notices

A3.12.1 The Commercial & Licensing Manager or a Police Officer may serve notice in writing for a taxi or private hire vehicle, or the taximeter affixed to such a vehicle, to be examined at the Council's preferred facility at a time specified in the notice. This notice may only be served if there are concerns as to the condition of the vehicle or the accuracy of the taximeter. The vehicle may be suspended until such time as the taximeter is deemed suitable and accurate.

A3.12.2 If the Officer is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to allow the suspension notice to be withdrawn within a period of two (2) months from date of issue, the vehicle licence will be deemed automatically revoked.

A3.13 Refusal to Renew

A3.13.1 As an alternative to revocation, the Commercial & Licensing Manager may decide that the appropriate action, in a situation where the licence is shortly to expire, is to order that the licence shall not be renewed. The Commercial & Licensing Manager may suspend the existing licence for the remainder of its licence period depending on the individual merits of the case.

A3.13.2 Any refusal to renew a licence is paused pending the period for appeal expiring or, in the case of an appeal, the appeal being determined. Where necessary for public safety, the Commercial & Licensing Manager may determine that the refusal to renew a driver licence takes immediate effect and is not held pending an appeal.

A3.14 Simple Caution

A3.14.1 The purpose of a Simple Caution as an alternative to prosecution is to:

- deal quickly and efficiently with less serious offences
- divert less serious offences away from the Courts; and
- reduce the likelihood of repeat offences.

A3.14.2 The following criteria must be met before a Simple Caution is administered:

- there must be sufficient evidence of guilt to give a realistic prospect of a conviction
- the offender must admit the offence; and
- the offender must understand the significance of the caution and give informed consent to be cautioned.

A3.14.3 The Commercial & Licensing Manager will issue a simple caution.

A3.14.4 Should an offender not accept the Simple Caution, the Council will consider alternative enforcement action, usually a prosecution.

A3.15 Prosecution

A3.15.1 The decision to prosecute is significant as it may impact on the licence holder's future employability. Generally, the circumstances that may warrant a prosecution include, but are not limited to:

- clear disregard for legislation and/or this policy, particularly where the economic benefits/gain are substantial and provide advantage of those licence holders who are law-abiding and compliant with this policy
- when there has been blatant and/or reckless disregard for the safety of passengers or other road users
- where there have been repeated breaches of legislation or the requirements of this policy
- where a particular type of offence is prevalent, and a clear message needs to be sent; or
- where a particular contravention has caused serious public concern.

A3.15.2 The investigating officer will advise the Commercial & Licensing Manager of the likelihood of a prosecution. The authorisation for prosecution is made by the Senior Environmental Health & Licensing Manager.

A3.16 Right of Appeal

A3.16.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Sections 48, 52 and 77 outline an applicant's right of appeal.

A3.17.2 Where an applicant is aggrieved by the Council's decision to refuse to grant, refuse to renew, suspend, or revoke a licence, or impose conditions on

a licence the applicant has a right of appeal to the local Magistrates' Court. The only two exceptions are:

- in the case of a refusal to grant or renew a taxi vehicle licence where the appeal lies directly to the Crown Court, and
- (ii) the decision to suspend a taxi or private hire vehicle licence under s68 of the 1976 Act against which there is no right of appeal

A3.17.3 An appeal against the Council's decision must be made at the Court within twenty-one (21) days of the notification by the Council.

A3.18 Investigations following complaints

A3.18.1 Complaints are primarily received against drivers from customers and other persons affected by their activity and usually relate to unprofessional behaviour; complaints are also received against Private Hire Operators. Licensing Officers will investigate all complaints and will contact the complainant, licence holder and any other party involved and obtain admissible statements.

A3.18.2 The investigation findings will be determined following an assessment of evidence collected and a decision made as to any action to be levied against the licence holder.

A3.18.3 All decisions will be in accordance with this policy and the General Enforcement Policy (Environmental Health & Licensing). Investigation outcomes will be communicated to the licence holder and complainant.

Appendix 3A - Penalty Points System

A3a.1 The penalty points system will operate without prejudice to the Council's ability to take other action under appropriate legislation or as provided for by this policy.

A3a.2 The Penalty Points System operates as an informal mechanism to notify drivers and operators that their actions and behaviours do not comply with either legislative requirements or their licence conditions. It serves to act as a deterrent for continuing the actions and/or behaviours and which are not compatible with this Policy's 'fit and proper' person test or national legislation. The affected person will be integrally involved in any investigation and their mitigation will be taken into account.

A3a.3 Before penalty points are issued, there must be sufficient evidence to prove, on the balance of probabilities, the offence or breach of licensing requirements/legislative standards.

A3a.4 In determining whether penalty points are a suitable method to address concerns raised, the investigating officer will consider matters such as:

- previous warnings
- previous penalty point offences
- mitigating circumstances
- seriousness of the misconduct
- effect of the misconduct on the passengers, public or other drivers
- the likelihood of the misconduct being repeated
- acceptance of the misconduct/remorse for their actions
- co-operation with any investigation

A3a.5 Points issued to the licence holder will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days from the date the investigating officer has determined fault.

A3a.6 Once issued, penalty points will stay on the licence holders record for eighteen (18) months from the date they are awarded.

A3a.7 Licence holders that have twelve (12) or more points during a rolling eighteen (18) month period will be required to attend a meeting to query their actions and behaviours leading to the points. Action in accordance with this Policy's enforcement stance will be taken against that licence holder.

A3a.8 Should the enforcement be a suspension or revocation, the points will be voided.

A3a.9 There is no right of appeal against the award of penalty points by an Authorised Officer of the Council as this is not a formal sanction in its own right. Affected persons are able to lodge a complaint via the Council's complaint procedure, where appropriate.

A3a.10 Table of penalty points

Misconduct	Points
1. Being unpleasant towards a passenger or member of the public	4
2. Verbal abuse towards a passenger or member of the public	8
3. Physical abuse of any person	12
4. Rudeness towards, failure to co-operate with or obstruction of a council officer	10
5. Failing to ensure the safety of a passenger entering, alighting or whilst conveyed in a licensed vehicle	10
6. Failing to provide reasonable assistance with a passenger's luggage	4
7. Refusal to carry an assistance dog	12
8. Charging an additional amount for the carrying of an assistance dog	12
9. Failing to allow an assistance dog to travel in the passenger compartment with the passenger	10
10. Failing to assist a passenger with an assistance dog to enter or alight the vehicle	10
11. Refusal to carry a passenger in a wheelchair	12
12. Charging an additional amount for the carrying of the wheelchair	12
13. Failing to assist a passenger in a wheelchair to enter or alight the vehicle	10
14. Eating whilst conveying passengers	3
15. Consuming alcohol whilst available for hire	12
16. Smoking or vaping in a licensed vehicle at any time	6
17. Failure to correctly use the taximeter when hired for journeys starting and ending within Stevenage (hackney carriage/taxi only)	12
18. Failing to agree a fare with the passenger for any out-of-district Journey where the taximeter is not being used	12
19. Charging a taxi passenger more than the metered or agreed fare	12
20. Failing to advise a private hire passenger of the fare prior to the start of the journey	12
21. Failing to display the current fare tariff card prominently within a taxi	4
22. Private hire driver soliciting for hire in a private hire vehicle	12
23. Private hire driver accepting a fare that is not pre-booked directly with the private hire operator	12
24. Failing to display the specified door sign on a private hire vehicle	4
25. Displaying a sign or advertisement on a licensed vehicle contrary to this policy or without Council consent (where required)	5

26. Failing to advise of a relevant medical condition as required by this policy	9
27. Failing to provide a receipt when requested or when required by this policy	4
28. Failing to notify the Council of a change of name and/or address	4
29. Failing to advise the Council of an accident as required by this policy	4
30. Failing to advise the Council in writing of convictions during the period of a licence in accordance with this policy	12
31. Failing to disclose previous convictions on an application form	12
32. Failing to ensure the exterior and/or interior of the licensed vehicle is maintained in a clean, sound and roadworthy condition	6
33. Failing to display the external licence plate in accordance with the requirements of this policy	10
34. Failing to display the internal licence plate	6
35. Using a hand-held mobile telephone or entertainment device whilst driving	12
36. Knowingly giving false information to passengers	6
37. Failing to collect pre-booked passengers or failing to arrive at a pre-booked location at the agreed time without reasonable excuse	5
38. Failure to comply with the no idling requirements of this policy	3
39. Failure to display a driver badge	6
40. Refusal to take a fare without reasonable excuse	12
41. Unnecessarily prolonging a journey	9
42. Waiting/parking in parking bays without a valid parking ticket	4
43. Waiting/parking on a loading bay, disability bay or bus stop	4
44. Waiting/parking on yellow lines or a footway	4
45. Carrying persons other than the hirer without the hirer's consent	6
46. Carrying more passengers than permitted	12
47. Using a licensed vehicle to ply for hire or to be made available for hire when in an unsafe and/or un-roadworthy condition	12
48. Driver leaving a taxi unattended on a rank other than for a comfort break	3
49. Any other behaviour or misconduct not specified above (investigating officer to determine the number of points based on the nearest comparable offence above)	3-12

Appendix 4 – Good Driver Standards

A4.1 General responsibilities

A4.1.1 Licensed drivers shall use their best endeavours to promote the image of the trade by:

- complying with all aspects of this policy,
- maintaining their vehicles in a safe, and satisfactory condition at all times,
- attending punctually when undertaking pre-booked hiring,
- assisting passengers accessing and alighting from the vehicle,
- offering passengers reasonable assistance with luggage, and
- behaving in a civil, orderly, and responsible manner at all times.

A4.1.2 To avoid nuisance to residents when picking up or waiting for a fare, a licensed driver shall:

- not sound the vehicle's horn illegally to attract the passenger's attention,
- keep the volume of all audio equipment to a reasonable level, and
- switch off the engine when required to wait.

A4.1.3 Whilst waiting at private hire operator premises, in addition to the requirements of subsection A4.1.2, a licensed driver shall:

- not undertake servicing or repair of vehicles on the highway,
- not undertake servicing or repair of vehicles on the premises unless appropriate planning permission has been obtained,
- take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the business operation does not cause unnecessary disturbance to residents, and
- ensure that the vehicle is not left idling at any time whilst parked.

A4.1.4 Drivers should be aware that they are in a position of significant responsibility, not only ensuring the safety of their passengers, but also the safety of the community as a whole. Any driver becoming aware of any criminal activity, suspected criminal activity, or safeguarding concerns is expected to report the matter to the police at the earliest opportunity.

A4.2 Driver Dress Code

A4.2.1 The Council believes that licensed drivers have a responsibility to dress professionally and appropriately whilst undertaking taxi or private hire work to promote confidence amongst members of the public, especially visitors to the District.

A4.2.2 It is not acceptable for drivers to:

- display bare chests,
- wear clothing or footwear which is unclean or damaged,
- wear clothing printed with wording, logos or graphics which may offend,
- wear footwear that prevents the safe operation of the vehicle,

- wear headgear that partially or completely conceals the face or the identity of the driver

A4.2.3 This list is not exhaustive and Authorised Officers will assess whether standards of dress are acceptable. If an Authorised Officer deems a driver's standard of dress to be unacceptable, the decision will have effect as though it were included in the above list.

A4.3 Driver Conduct

A4.3.1 The driver shall be respectably dressed, clean and tidy in appearance at all times whilst their vehicle is being made available for hire.

A4.3.2 The driver shall at all times, when acting in accordance with the driver's licence granted to them, wear or display such badge as supplied by the Council in such position and manner as to be plainly and distinctly visible at all times.

A4.3.3 The driver shall not lend the badge to any other person or cause or permit any other person to wear it.

A4.3.4 On termination or surrender of a driver's licence, the driver shall return the badge to the Council immediately.

A4.3.5 The driver shall behave in a civil, polite and orderly manner at all times and shall take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of persons conveyed in, or entering or alighting from, the vehicle.

A4.3.6 The driver shall not wilfully or negligently cause or permit the vehicle licence plate to be concealed from public view or allow the licence plate to be so defaced as to make any information illegible.

A4.3.7 The driver who has agreed to, or has been hired to, be in attendance with the vehicle at an appointed time and place shall, unless delayed or prevented by some sufficient cause, punctually attend with such vehicle at such appointed time and place.

A4.3.8 The driver, when hired to drive to a particular destination, shall proceed to that destination by either the shortest available route, or the believed cheapest route considering all known factors such as diversions, delays, etc.

A4.3.9 The driver shall not convey, or permit to be conveyed, in such vehicle any greater number of persons than the number of persons specified on the Vehicle Licence.

A4.3.10 The driver shall convey a reasonable amount of luggage and afford reasonable assistance in loading and unloading luggage.

A4.3.11 The driver must not solicit, by calling out or otherwise importune any person to hire or be carried for hire.

A4.3.12 The vehicle shall be presented in a clean and tidy condition for each journey and free from any unpleasant odours.

A4.3.13 The driver shall not smoke or 'vape' in a licensed vehicle at any time.

A4.3.14 The driver shall not drink or eat in the vehicle whilst conveying passengers.

A4.3.15 The driver must ensure that the noise emitted from any sound equipment in the vehicle does not cause annoyance to any persons, whether inside or outside the vehicle.

A4.3.16 The driver shall not operate the horn as a means of signalling that the vehicle has arrived. Drivers must not use a mobile phone whilst driving unless it is designed for hands-free operation.

A4.3.17 The driver must notify the Council within a period of seven (7) days of:

- any criminal conviction, caution, or fixed penalty notice,
- any driving endorsement,
- any change of medical condition that may impact on the ability to drive, or
- any change of name or address whilst the licence is in force.

A4.4 Lost Property

A4.4.1 A licensed driver shall diligently search the vehicle periodically for any property which may have been accidentally left therein.

A4.4.2 In the event of lost property being found that is identifiable to a known passenger the driver shall either return the property to the passenger forthwith or contact the passenger to arrange its return within 24 hours.

A4.4.3 Where the passenger cannot be identified, the lost property should be handed in to the Private Hire Operator where the journey was pre booked, or, the Council offices where the journey was undertaken in a Hackney Carriage, within 72 hours.

A4.5 Carriage of animals

A4.5.1 A driver may not carry any animal not belonging to a passenger in a licensed vehicle whilst available for hire or carrying passengers.

A4.5.2 Animals, other than assistance dogs, in the custody of passengers may be carried at the driver's discretion, provided they are restrained in a safe manner.

A4.5.3 A driver must carry assistance dogs when requested to do so by a passenger unless they have been issued with a medical exemption certificate. Assistance dogs include guide dogs for blind or partially sighted persons, hearing dogs for the hard of hearing or deaf persons, and any other assistance dog which assists a person with a physical or mental impairment.

A4.6 Carriages of passengers with wheelchairs

A4.6.1 Passengers with wheelchairs have the choice to travel in a normal saloon, estate or multi-passenger vehicles or a specially adapted wheelchair accessible vehicle. Drivers of non-wheelchair accessible vehicles must carry a passenger with a wheelchair unless the vehicle is unable to accommodate the wheelchair within the luggage compartment.

A4.6.2 Drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles must:

- carry any passenger with a wheelchair,
- not charge any additional fare for passengers with wheelchairs,
- be fully conversant with the correct method of operating all ramps, lifts and wheelchair restraints fitted to the vehicle,
- ensure that all wheelchairs are firmly secured in the vehicle using an approved restraining system and that the wheelchair brakes have been applied prior to commencing the journey,
- ensure that all ramps, lifts and wheelchair restraints fitted to the vehicle are available in full
- working order at all times the vehicle is available for hire.

A4.7 Exemption Certificates

A4.7.1 Drivers exempt from carrying assistance dogs or manual handling tasks must have their exemption certificate available for the customer to view.

Appendix 5 – Standard Private Hire Operator conditions

A5.1 A private hire operator must ensure that every private hire vehicle has a current private hire vehicle licence and is driven by a person who holds a current private hire driver licence. All three licences, private hire operator, private hire vehicle and private hire driver, must be issued by the same licensing authority.

A5.2 The operator shall:

- provide a prompt, efficient and reliable service to members of the public,
- ensure that their office staff always act in a civil and courteous manner,
- ensure that booked vehicles arrive punctually at the appointed place,
- ensure that premises provided for the purpose of booking or waiting are kept clean and are adequately lit, heated, and ventilated with adequate seating facilities.

A5.3 Booking records shall be kept in a non-erasable form in a suitable log or book, the pages of which are numbered consecutively, or in an appropriate electronic format.

A5.4 Prior to each journey, the operator shall record the following particulars of every booking of a private hire vehicle or hackney carriage accepted:

- date of the booking,
- name and address of the hirer,
- time of pick-up
- address of the point of pick-up,
- destination,
- licence number (or other identification) of the driver allocated to the booking,
- plate number (or other identification) of the vehicle allocated to the booking,
- fare agreed between the operator and hirer at the time of booking.

A5.5 The operator shall keep the following records of the particulars of all private hire vehicles or hackney carriages operated by them:

- type, make, model, colour and engine size of vehicles,
- year when the vehicle was first licensed for private hire,
- vehicle registration numbers,
- number of seats for passengers,
- owners of the vehicles,
- insurance details of vehicles,
- method of charging, i.e. whether or not a meter is fitted,
- private hire vehicle plate number.

A5.6 The operator shall keep the following records of the particulars of all drivers of private hire vehicles operated by them:

- driver's name, address and call sign,
- date employment commenced,
- date employment ceased,
- any change of address, including the date the address changed
- any illness, disability or condition which may affect the driver's ability to safely carry out his duties,

- expiry date of driver licence
- exemption certificate issued by Stevenage Borough Council

A5.7 All records maintained by the operator shall be kept for at least twelve (12) months after entry and shall be produced for inspection, on request, by any authorised Officer of the Council or any Police Officer.

A5.8 The operator shall, within seven (7) days, disclose to the Council, in writing, details of any convictions, including motoring convictions and fixed penalty notices, imposed on them (or if the operator is a company or partnership, on any of the directors or partners) during the life of the licence.

A5.9 All persons defined as an Operator will undertake a basic DBS and be registered with the update service.

A5.10 The private hire operator must keep a register of staff and their DBS details which must be made available to the Council upon request and as part of the application (grant and renewal) process.

A5.11 The operator shall notify the Council, in writing, within seven days of the engagement or employment of a hackney carriage or private hire driver, the operation of any additional hackney carriage or private hire vehicle and the termination of engagement, employment or operation of such hackney carriage or private hire driver or vehicle.

A5.12 Before an application for a private hire operator licence is granted, the applicant must either produce evidence that they have taken out appropriate public liability insurance for the premises to be licensed or sign a declaration that their premises is not open to the public.

A5.13 The operator shall ensure that every hackney carriage or private hire vehicle operated by them in accordance with this licence is covered by a Certificate of Insurance, or cover note, indemnifying the proprietor of the said vehicle within the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1972, for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward.

A5.14 The operator must notify the Council in writing of any proposed change of address during the period of the licence in order that the Council can consider its suitability. The operator may not change operating address until such time as the change has been approved in writing by the Council. The operator must also provide proof of public liability insurance for the new premises or sign a declaration that their new premises is not open to the public prior to the change being approved.

A5.15 The operator must provide ancillary training to its booking and dispatch staff on vulnerable persons safeguarding and the operator's legal obligations (duty to transport assistance dogs, carry heavy loads).

Appendix 6 – Licence conditions for stretched limousines

A6.1 Left-hand drive limousines will be permitted as private hire vehicles

A6.2 Sideways facing seating will be permitted in limousines providing that it conforms to all relevant road traffic vehicle legislation.

A6.3 All limousines licensed as private hire vehicles must hold a valid Individual Vehicle Approval Certificate and be fitted with tyres of appropriate size and grade for that Approval.

A6.4 All limousines licensed as private hire vehicles must obtain six-monthly test certificates showing that the vehicle has satisfied the standards of the appropriate MOT Class. The vehicle licence holder is responsible for sourcing a garage approved to carry out such tests and providing documentation attesting to the garage's compliance with the Council's vehicle testing requirements.

A6.5 All limousines licensed as private hire vehicles must:

- reduce their seating capacity to a maximum of eight (8) passengers,
- not carry more than eight (8) passengers, including children, at any time,
- not carry passengers in any seats in the driver's compartment,
- ensure that any advertising of the limousine states the maximum seating capacity.

A6.6 Seatbelts complying to all relevant legislation must be fitted to all forward and rear facing seats and must be worn by passengers at all times the vehicle is in motion. There is no legal requirement for seatbelts to be fitted on sideways facing seats, however if they are fitted, they must be worn by passengers at all times the vehicle is in motion.

A6.8 If alcohol drinks are to be provided in the vehicle:

- an appropriate licence under the Licensing Act 2003 must be in effect,
- alcohol may only be sold whilst the vehicle is stationary,
- whilst the vehicle is in motion, all receptacles containing alcohol shall be securely stored,
- if any occupants of the vehicle are below the age of eighteen (18) years old, the vehicle must not contain any alcohol,
- all drinking receptacles used in the vehicle must be made of shatterproof glass, plastic or polycarbonate.

A6.9 The driver shall not play or permit the performance of any media that, given its age classification or content, is unsuitable for the age of the youngest passenger in the vehicle.

A6.10 Limousines licensed as private hire vehicles are not permitted to carry luggage within the passenger compartment of the vehicle.

A6.11 Limousines licensed as private hire vehicles must carry a safety hammer capable of being used to break the window glass of the vehicle. The hammer must be securely located within the driver's compartment.

A6.12 Limousines that are licensed private hire vehicles may only be booked from and despatched by a licensed private hire operator and driven by a licensed private hire driver; all three licences must be issued by the same licensing authority.

Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Policy Consultation 2023

Substantive changes to the Hackney Carriage
(taxi) and Private Hire policy

Contents

Changes from 2014 – All Policies	3
Changes from 2014 – Drivers	4
Changes from 2014 – Vehicles	4
Changes from 2014 – Operators	5
Changes from Draft v1	6

From 2014 Policies

All Policies	Definitions – revised and updated
	Objectives – further discussion provided regarding the policy objectives
	Status – new section; departure from the policy
	Implementation - removed
	Application procedures and service standards – Four working days increased to 15 working days Written reminders from the Council removed and may be sent as matter of courtesy Applications received less than 10 days has been changed to 15 days
	Consideration of applications - removed
	Right to work in the UK – changed to meet current legislative requirements, Section 8 of draft policy
	Disclosure Scotland checks – removed and new section regarding DBS for drivers (9.10), proprietors (10.2) and operators (11.1.2 and 11.5).
	Grant and renewal of Licences Operators changed from 1 year to 5 years
	Added sections in draft policy 1.5.9 Taxi forum 2.6 Licence fees 2.7 Payments 2.8 Refunds 2.9 Duplicate copies Section 3: Role of Hackney carriage/taxi and private hire trade Section 4: Powers and duties Section 5: Authorised Officers Section 6: Whistleblowing Section 7: National Register of taxi licence refusals, revocations and suspensions (NR3S) Appendix 1: Suitability Policy Appendix 2: Definition of ‘fit and proper’ Appendix 3 Enforcement of this policy Appendix 3a: Penalty points system Appendix 6: Licence conditions of Stretch Limousines

From 2014 Policies

<p>Hackney carriage and private hire drivers – Policy and Conditions of Licence</p>	<p>Section 9 of the draft Policy Drivers competency New application time to completion added NR3S check added Safeguarding training requirement added Bar added for unsuccessful completion of knowledge and spoken English tests Medical examination parameters revised and specific guidance issued for diabetic applicants and drivers DBS requirements altered to meet the statutory guidance Exemption certificate section added</p> <p>Good driver standards added (appendix 4 draft policy)</p>
<p>Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles (inc Limousine Licences) – Policy and Conditions of Licence</p>	<p>Section 10 of the draft policy Limitation on numbers added Disclosure check for proprietors added Simplification of specification for acceptable vehicle type Environmental considerations revised to Environmental considerations and environmentally friendly fleet section Stretched Limousines section revised to draft policy Section 12 and Appendix 6 Livery section revised and updated Reduced licence fees added Idling advice added Vehicle licence section updated to Vehicle testing regime Change/transfer of vehicle application and change of vehicle registration updated in section 1.5 draft policy MOT advisories added Vehicle accidents added Advertising added Tyre requirements revised Card machine requirement added Security/CCTV advice updated and revised Private hire meters/personal digital assistant requirements added Accessibility section revised to draft Disability access section Insurance requirements revised Unauthorised use requirement added. Powers and duties – General removed.</p>

From 2014 Policies

<p>Private Hire Operators – Policy and conditions of licensing</p>	<p>Section 11 of the draft policy Operators records of work Wheelchair accessible vehicle quota removed Booking time and date removed Address of hirer required Remarks requirement removed Removed dates when vehicle added and withdrawn from fleet Driver exemption certificate added</p>
	<p>General Operator conditions updated and available at appendix 5. Operators DBS checks to be on the update service Register of DBS details of staff members to be held Public liability insurance required for any office that allow members of the public to enter Training for booking and dispatch staff for vulnerable persons safeguarding and operator obligations</p>

From Draft V1

Section 7 – National Register of Taxi Licence Refusals, Revocations and Suspensions (NR3S)	Legislation has required the Council to use the NR3S system as part of mandatory licencing searches. Information submitted and retention timeframes have been defined to meet legislative requirements.
Section 9.1.4 and 9.1.5	Addition of NR3S to routine checks
Section 10.1.2	Brief summary of the outcome of the unmet demand survey
Section 10.3.2	Vehicle specifics for engine size or break horse power removed
Section 10.4.2 and 10.4.6	Age standard for new vehicles removed
Section 10.4.7	Euro 5 vehicle renewal deadline removed
Section 10.6	Recommends the display of anti-idling sticker rather than requiring a sticker be displayed
Section 10.8.1	MOT advisories relating to safety be rectified rather than those relating solely to tyres and brakes
Section 10.12.6	Removed school contract vehicles from exemption to display a vehicle plate
Section 10.14.1	Tyres on vehicles to be suitable; consistent tyre types removed
Section 10.17	Card machines installation date changed. Exemption added for contract vehicles.
Section 10.18	Requirements for optional CCTV updated.
Section 10.21.1	Requirements for new hackney carriage/taxi vehicles revised.
Appendix 1	Revised to meet Department for Transport licensing standards; other offences added
Appendix 3a.1.1	Added Council complaints procedure
Appendix 4.4.3	Paragraph revised for dealing with lost property
Appendix 5	Removed

Premises

email

APPENDIX C

Medical

Lister Hospital
 Stanmore Medical Group - Stanmore Road
 Stanmore Medical Group - St Nicholas Health Centre
 Stanmore Medical Group - Chells Surgery
 King George & Manor House Surgeries
 Emperors Gate
 Shephall Health Centre
 Symonds Green Health Centre
 Bedwell Medical Centre
 Roebuck Surgery
 Cygnet Hospital

stanmoremedicalgroup@nhs.net
stanmoremedicalgroup@nhs.net
stanmoremedicalgroup@nhs.net
e8206.kinggeorgesurgery@nhs.net
e8206.kinggeorgesurgery@nhs.net
admin.shephall@nhs.net

e82093.bedwellmedicalcentre@nhs.net
e82093.bedwellmedicalcentre@nhs.net
Enquiriesproperty@cygnethealth.co.uk

01438 314333
 01438 313223
 01438 313223

 01438 361111
 01438 742639
 01438 312097

 01438 364488
 01438 311130
 01438 314519

Local Services

Adult Care Services
 Childrens Services
 School contacts

contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk
contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk
vijoy.toora@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Hotels

Holiday Inn Express
 Holiday Inn
 IBIS
 Novotel
 Hotel Cromwell
 Premier Inn
 Roebuck Inn

info@histevenage.com
H2794@accor.com
reception@novotel-stevenage.com
enquiries@cromwellstevenage.co.uk

book@roebuckinn.com

01438 346100
 01438 779954
 0333 321 9027
 01438 365445

Pubs

Tranquil Turtle
 Fisherman Inn
 The Chequers
 The Crown - Aston
 Lounge 72

b.kelly@tranquil-turtle.co.uk
fisherman.stevenage@mcmullens.co.uk
chequers.stevenage@vintageinns.co.uk
hello@crownastonend.co.uk
info@lounge72nightclub.com

The Mulberry Tree
The Standing Order

Restaurants

Beefeater
The Coopers Inn
The Old Forge

coreysmillstevenagegm@whitbread.com

oldforge@tobycarvery.co.uk

Supermarket

Asda
Sainsbury's Hitchin Road
Sainsbury's Magpie Crescent

Tesco London Road
Tesco The Forum

Entertainment

Stevenage FC
The Living Room
Spectrum Drug & Alcohol Recovery Services

info@stevenagefc.com

Herts@cgl.org.uk

3003650304

8006523169

Transport

Stevenage Train Station
Stevenage Bus Station
Luton Airport

shaun.smith@gtrailway.com

Facilities.Helpdesk@stevenage.gov.uk

info@ltn.aero

Partners

TfL

KarlWilliams@tfl.gov.uk

Herts & Beds LO's
Sada

various
SADA@stevenage.gov.uk

Rough Sleeper Team
Climate
Regen
Pub watch
Old Town Business Partnership
Herts police
Camhs, Saffron Ground
Licensed Private Hire Car Association

Community Centres

BEDWELL
CHELLS
CHELLS MANOR
PIN GREEN
SHEPHALL
SPRINGFIELD HOUSE
St NICHOLAS
SYMONDS GREEN
THE OVAL COMMUNITY CENTRE

Charities

Age UK Hertfordshire
Scope
Disability Rights UK
RNIB
Guide Dogs
Mobility Trust
Marmalade Trust
Centre for Better Aging
Reengage

Everyone Active

Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre
Stevenage Swimming Pool

roughsleeperteam@stevenage.gov.uk
Fabian.Oyarzun@stevenage.gov.uk
Regeneration@stevenage.gov.uk
suewayman@hotmail.com
sotbcp@gmail.com
karen.mellor@herts.police.uk
hpft.spa@nhs.net
steve@lphca.co.uk

admin@bedwellcc.co.uk
timebridgecca@hotmail.com
chellsmanorccstevenage@gmail.com
hampsonparkcc@gmail.com
paula@shephallcentre.co.uk
springfieldhousecommunitycentre@hotmail.com
sncastevenage@gmail.com
symondsgreen@symondsgreencc.co.uk
gailmardlin@ovalcommunity.com

customer.relations@ageco.co.uk
partnerships@scope.org.uk
enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org
helpline@rnib.org.uk
sapenquiries@guidedogs.org.uk
mobility@mobilitytrust.org.uk
info@marmaladetrust.org
info@ageing-better.org.uk
knowledge@reengage.org.uk

PaulRuff@everyoneactive.com
DarrenBickell@everyoneactive.com



Ridlins Athletics Stadium
Stevenage Golf & Conference Centre

DarrenBickell@everyoneactive.com
sharonhannah@everyoneactive.com

Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Policy Consultation 2023

Final amendments to the Hackney Carriage (taxi)
and Private Hire policy

From Draft V2

Contents Drivers: Vulnerable adult and child safeguarding	Vulnerable adult, child safeguarding and disability awareness
Definitions – Driver	Add ‘whether a hackney carriage/taxi or private hire vehicle’
Definitions – Fit and Proper	Replace with ‘A person who we think has the right skills and ability assessed throughout the application process or the duration of their licence, because they meet the definition in Appendix 2’.
Definitions – Mitigating Circumstances	Remove ‘authority’
Section 1.5.2	Add ‘proprietor’ to ‘The Council has no responsibility in ensuring that the operator or driver ...’
Section 1.5.4	Add ‘operator’ to ‘In this case the driver or vehicle concerned would not be licensed and would be unable to work.’
Section 1.5.4	Add ‘As such a licence will not ordinarily be granted or renewed until all checks are received.’
Section 1.5.7	Replace paragraph with ‘The Council will consider all applications, on their own merits, once it is satisfied that the form and supporting documents have been correctly completed and received by the Council.’
Section 1.5.8	Remove ‘dual’
Section 2.5	Delete ‘These vehicles are not insured to ply for hire.’ And replace with ‘Private Hire vehicles are not insured if they are not prebooked so cannot ply for hire.’
Section 3.31	Renumbered to 3.3.1
Section 3.3.1	Replace ‘fee’ with ‘fare’ and replace ‘imposed’ with ‘charged’
Section 9.2.2	Replace ‘becomes void’ with ‘lapses’
Section 9.6	Vulnerable adult, child safeguarding and disability awareness
Section 9.6.3	Remove ‘within twelve (12) months of the introduction of this policy.’ And replace with ‘prior to the next renewal after the policy comes into effect.’
Section 9.8.7	Add ‘All costs will be met by the Applicant/Licence Holder’.
Section 9.9.1	Add ‘will be required to supply’ before ‘further documents’ and add ‘the following’ before ‘additional documents’.
Section 9.10.6	Remove ‘as a driver’ and replace with ‘as a licence holder’. Remove ‘for drivers’.
Section 10.3.1	Remove ‘provisional’.
Section 10.3.6	Remove ‘an interim vehicle inspection or’
Section 10.4.6	Change date to 1 February 2025
Section 10.17.1	Remove ‘fitted’ and replace with ‘supplied’.
Section 11.5.3	Replace ‘standard’ with ‘basic’.

Appendix A1.5.9	Delete paragraph as a repeat of paragraph A1.5.5
Appendix A1.6.6	Replace 'impeded' with 'refused'.
Appendix A1.8	Insert A1.8.3 'Existing licence holders will have their licences revoked.
Appendix A2.8	<p>Provide a definition of fit and proper for Operators to read;</p> <p>The 'fit and proper' test for an operator is adapted from the definition for drivers.</p> <p><i>Would the Officer charged with the ability to grant a licence allow their son, daughter, spouse or partner, mother, father, grandson, granddaughter, or any other person for whom they care, to book a private hire vehicle and provide address details of their home and information of when the home will be empty?</i></p>
Appendix A3.13.1	Replace 'Commercial & Licensing Manager' to 'General Purposes Committee'.
Appendix A3.13.2	Replace 'Commercial & Licensing Manager' to 'General Purposes Committee'.
Appendix A4.1.2	After third bullet point add '(see 10.6 Idling)' to the end of the sentence.
Appendix A4.3.2	Remove 'or display'.
Appendix A4.6.1	Add 'and must not charge any additional fare.' to last sentence
Appendix A5.14	Delete paragraph

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