

# Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy

## Key Changes

### Introduction

The following information highlights the key changes that are proposed in the draft policy, but is not comprehensive, so should not be relied upon as such in lieu of reviewing the full draft policy to review the amendments that the Council is considering.

### Key Changes

- 1.1. The Council is requiring drivers to sign up to the DBS Update service as part of their application. This saves the driver money compared to starting a new DBS each application, prevents their DBS from needing to be applied for when they renew their licence (which is the most common reason for their licence being delayed) and allows the Council to carry out checks when it feels it is appropriate to do so, rather than waiting 3 years for renewal as it does currently. In addition to this, The Council will request information directly from the local Police in order to establish if there is any information available that should be considered as part of determining whether an applicant is fit and proper to hold a licence.
- 1.2. The Council will no longer be issuing temporary licences where applicants for renewal of driver licences have not applied in sufficient time to have their application dealt with to avoid a break in them holding a valid licence. The need for these is not justifiable when balanced against public safety, especially given the changes proposed in 2.1. Licence holders must accept personal responsibility for maintaining their licence, and renewing in good time is a significant aspect of this. If they are unable to manage the administration of their licence, the Council may consider that they are not fit and proper to hold one.
- 1.3. As well as the removal of the availability of temporary licences, it is also proposed that there will be no formal grace period (currently 28 days) for renewals where these are not submitted in time. This grace period has led licence holders to believe that they are still able to work during that time, despite their licence being expired.
- 1.4. The introduction of safeguarding and equality training as a requirement for existing and new applicants has also been included. This is common good practice across other authorities.
- 1.5. The suitability criteria for applicants and licence holders has been updated and has been adapted from the 'Guidance on determining the suitability of applicants and licensees in the

hackney and private hire trades' ('the Guidance'), and can be found at Appendix F in the draft policy. The document applies to all vehicle, driver and operator licence holders and applicants.

- 1.6. At the time that the Institute of Licensing published its suitability guidance, the Council already had partially higher standards, so it has brought standards up to those of the IoL where possible, but has maintained the existing higher standards.
- 1.7. The draft Policy proposes the use of the new NR3 National database for refused and revoked drivers. This will cost the Council around £1000 per annum to use, which can be recovered as part of the fees for driver's licences. Once in use, this will enable the Council to check whether new and renewal applicants have been refused or revoked by other councils, which will identify any applicant fraudulently completing their application form on this matter, and also enable the Council to make further enquiries with the relevant council to consider any such action and whether the details of this would lead the Council to consider that the applicant is not fit and proper to hold a licence.
- 1.8. Increasing our digital services in order to improve the efficiency of the Council's licensing service is important, and as such the draft policy looks to move to replace paper based procedures as far as is reasonable with the systems the Council currently has available. More information is provided in section 9 of the draft Policy.
- 1.9. The final notable addition to the policy is a strong emissions policy (Section 18 of the draft Policy). This is to reflect the Council's declaration that there is a current and future climate change emergency that requires urgent planning and action. This action will include the following:
  - That we work towards ensuring that the full range of council activities are net carbon neutral by 2030.
  - That an action plan will be developed as soon as possible.
  - That ensure all services make the maximum possible impact in challenging the extent and causes of climate change. The developing new Local Plan will incorporate the maximum possible sustainability requirements that the system will allow, and encourage developers to go beyond this in order to future proof homes and buildings.