

# 2024

## Hackney Carriage (Taxi) and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy Consultation Report



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## Table of Contents

Executive Summary		2
Methodology		3
Results		4
Conclusion		14



## Executive Summary

1. A number of stakeholders, including Hackney Carriage (Taxi) and Private Hire Vehicle licence holders, local residents and Lincolnshire Police were asked what they thought about proposed amendments to certain provisions within the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy as part of a four-week consultation in Spring 2024.
2. 205 responses were received. Respondents were asked for their views on various proposals to update the current hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licensing policy – prepared as a response to guidance issued by the Department for Transport in November 2023. These included driver proficiency, vehicle condition checks, vehicle age limits, the introduction of a maximum fare scale and flexible transport services.
3. The results of this consultation will be presented to SKDC’s Licensing Committee, who will determine whether or not the updates to the policy are approved. The policy – including any updates recommended by the Licensing Committee- will then go to Full Council for approval in May 2024.

## Purpose of report

4. The purpose of this report is to update SKDC’s Licensing Committee with the results of the Hackey Carriage (Taxi) and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy consultation that took place with various stakeholders from 19 March to 16 April 2024.

## Background

5. The stakeholders for this consultation were a mix of those that were contacted directly and asked to comment, and those who responded to an invitation to participate following promotion across the Council’s communication channels.
6. The survey was designed to elicit opinion on various proposed updates to the Council’s Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles Licensing Policy. Structured to reflect the

requirements of the Licensing Committee<sup>1</sup> as well as the recommendations from the Department for Transport it included questions on:

- Driver proficiency
- Vehicle Condition Checks
- Vehicle Age Limits
- Introduction of a Maximum Fare Scale
- Flexible Transport Services

## Methodology

7. The responses to this consultation were collected over a four-week period (19 March to 17 April 2024). 205 responses were received. The data was gathered via a web link to an on-line survey with printed copies of the survey available on request.
8. The consultation was promoted in several different ways. It was signposted on both SKDC's Facebook and Twitter accounts three times during the consultation period. It was also the subject of a press release on 19 March, with articles promoting the consultation appearing on-line in the local press on the same day<sup>2</sup>. Social media posts promoting the consultation gained 6,307 impressions, 197 engagements and 19 link clicks on Facebook. There were 747 views, 7 engagement and 5 link clicks on X (formerly Twitter).
9. Specific steps have been taken to verify the responses received as part of the consultation process. IP addresses have been collected and checked -independently of any other personal data- to establish if there have been any duplicate entries. The analysis revealed that seven responses had been received from the same IP address (based in Grantham). Further analysis showed that the responses were- with the exception of one -from residents from different genders and age groups. Three of the six had chosen to answer one question differently. For these reasons, they were judged to be legitimate responses.

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<sup>1</sup> [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Supplement Agenda Supplement for Licensing Committee, 16/02/2024 10:00](#)

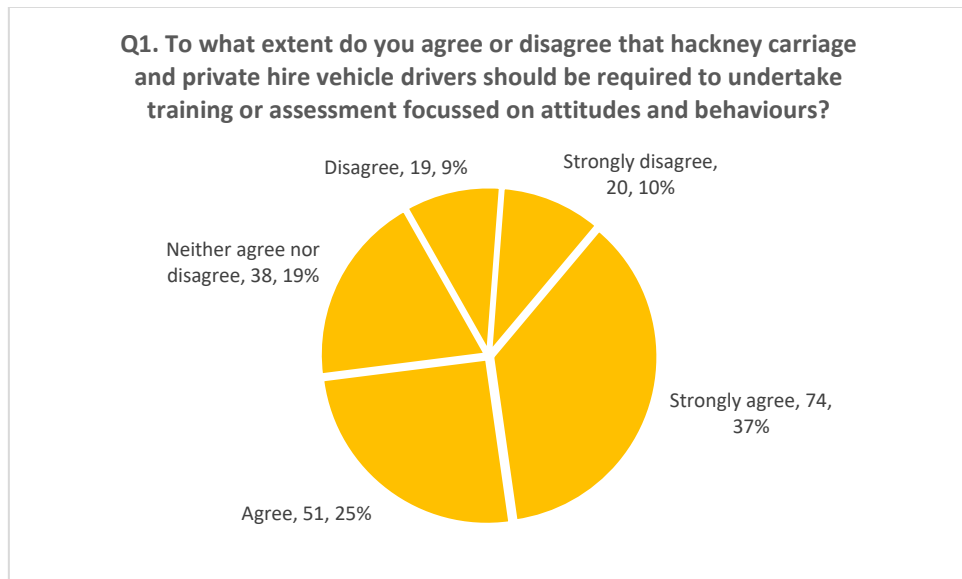
<sup>2</sup> <https://granthammatters.co.uk/have-your-say-on-taxi-licensing/>



## The results

### Driver Proficiency

10. The first proposed update to the policy the Council asked for opinions on related to Driver Proficiency. SKDC is proposing that the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy includes a requirement for hackney carriage (taxi) and private hire vehicle drivers to undertake training/assessment focussed on attitudes and behaviours.
11. This would involve those applying for a new licence, those renewing an existing licence or those against which a complaint has been made successfully completing a course. Upon renewal, drivers would not be required to undertake this training again. When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with this statement “To what extent do you agree or disagree that hackney carriage and private hire vehicle drivers should be required to undertake training or assessment focussed on attitudes and behaviours?” three fifths of those responding (125 or 61.9%) agreed, as illustrated in the pie chart below:



12. When offered the opportunity to comment on this proposal, there were clear views expressed for each side of the argument. This is illustrated in the two quotes overleaf:

**“This is a position of both trust & responsibility so a minimum standard of training should be compulsory”**

**“I don’t need to be taught how to behave to another human being. If you do need training for this, you’re doing the wrong job.”**

13. Some respondents suggested that this should be actioned only if there has been a problem, as shown here:

**“Only drivers who have 2 or more complaints about them should have training. Drivers who have no complaints should not”**

**“ONLY WHEN THERE HAS BEEN A COMPLAINT”**

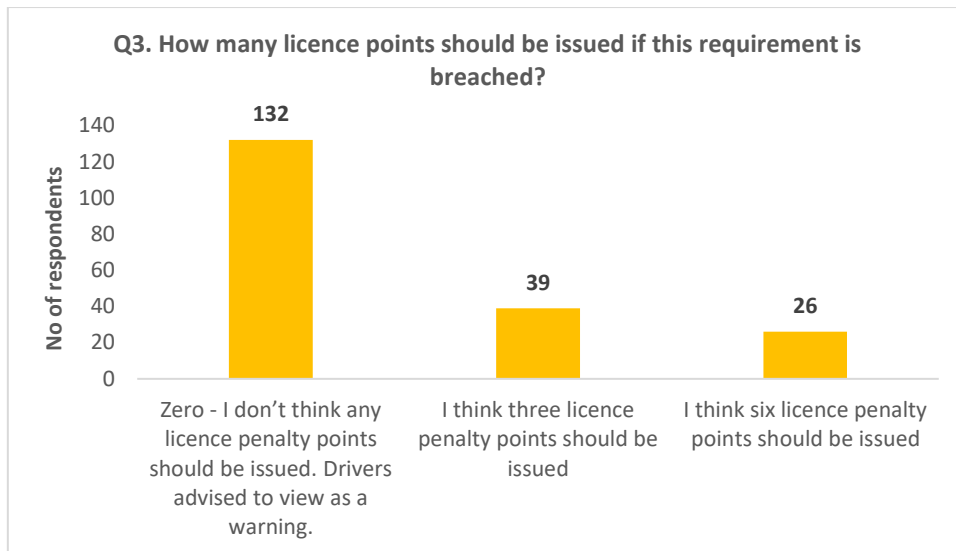
### **Vehicle Condition Checks**

14. The second area respondents were asked for their views on focused on vehicle condition checks, and the procedures that are followed. SKDC’s Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy currently states that drivers are legally responsible for the condition of their vehicle.

15. The proposed amendment to this policy would require drivers to undertake a daily walkaround check before the vehicle is used, and retain a copy of the vehicle checklist as proof that these checks have been undertaken. If, upon inspection, there is no proof that these checks have been carried out, licence penalty points would be issued.

16. When asked how many licence points should be issued, two thirds of respondents (132 or 67.0%) thought drivers should be advised to view as a warning, with no licence points being issued. 39 respondents (19.8%) thought drivers should receive three licence points and 26 (13.2%) thought they should receive six. This is illustrated in the graph overleaf:





17. Respondents were invited to comment on this proposal. Some were supportive as illustrated here:

**“It's vitally important members of the public always know they are travelling in a roadworthy compliant vehicle”**

**“This is important for public safety. It would take 3 minutes and needs to be properly enforced.”**

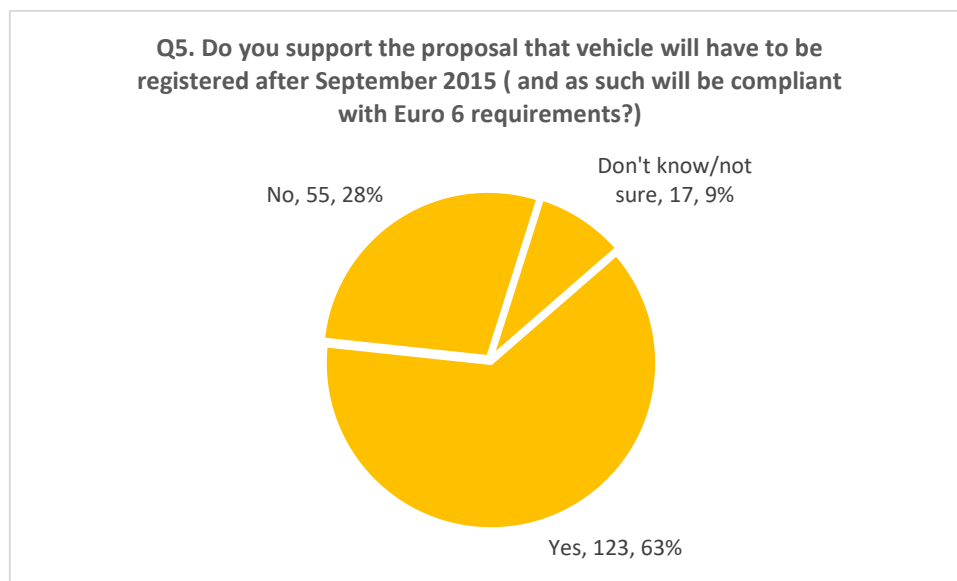
Others thought it should be a function carried out by the Council, rather than the drivers of the vehicles or that vehicles are already subjected to enough checks:

**“.....Inspections of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles is a regulatory matter. A function that SHOULD be executed by the licensing department, Is this not what licence fees and council tax pay for? This is your job not ours.”**

**“Vehicles undergo rigorous 6 monthly checks already and this feels like overkill.”**

## Vehicle Age Limits

18. The third proposal SKDC asked those responding to the survey to comment on relates to an age limit for vehicles. The Council is proposing that the age limit for vehicles at first registration is changed in its Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy.
19. If agreed, vehicles will have to be registered after September 2015. As such, they will therefore be compliant with Euro 6 (Euro 6 is the latest emissions standard for diesel cars in the UK. It was introduced in 2015 by the EU to reduce the level of harmful emissions being emitted by new cars). The policy currently states that vehicles cannot be more than 5 years old at first registration and no more than ten years old at renewal (twelve years old if they are a hybrid/electric/WAV model).
20. Just over three fifths of those responding to the survey (123 or 63.1%) supported the proposal that vehicles will have to be registered after September 2015 (and as such will be compliant with Euro 6 requirements), as shown here:



21. The comments made in relation to this proposal were either very supportive of it, and welcomed its introduction, or thought a proposal based on the age of a vehicle was arbitrary, and the condition of the vehicle was more important. Some respondents didn't understand the proposal.

22. Comments illustrating each of these viewpoints are shown below:

**“I welcome a maximum age for all public service vehicles, & migration to EV (electric vehicles) should be well supported.”**

**“Although it means a costly replacement vehicle, I think it is the right way to go in order to keep old bangers off the road that also give the profession a bad reputation.”**

**“I feel that if a vehicle can pass the current legislation regarding emissions, then the age of the vehicle shouldn’t matter as long as it passes the Hackney test.”**

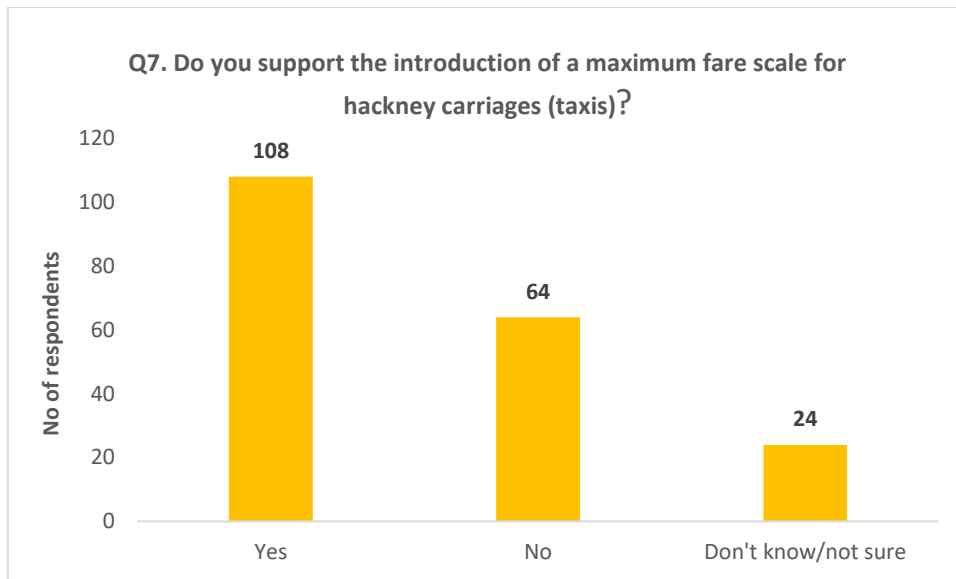
**“It shouldn’t matter how old the car is as long as the car is safe and looked after it should be fine”**

**“I don't really understand this question”**

### **Maximum Fare Scale**

23. The fourth proposal SKDC consulted on was if a maximum fare scale for hackney carriages (taxis) should be introduced and included in the Council’s Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy.
24. If approved, this would replace the scheme’s default fare scale, currently in operation, which is partially de-regulated and has four main components: a hiring charge, distance and time-based unit fares and surcharges. Currently, proprietors can set their own rates. Approving this proposal would mean SKDC would set the maximum fares that licensed hackney carriages could charge for a journey. The amounts which could be charged would be the subject of a separate consultation.
25. Just over half of those responding (108 or 55.1%) supported the introduction of a maximum fare scale, as shown in the bar chart overleaf:





26. The comments made in relation to this proposal fell into one of two categories. Some liked the idea, saying that it would ensure a level playing field, and that people would know what they were going to have to pay. Others were totally against the proposal, citing increases in the cost of living which are already making things difficult for them:

**“Good idea, makes it an even playing field for all.”**

**“There should be a maximum fare scale for Hackneys, so the public knows what to expect.”**

**“By setting a maximum, how are drivers supposed to make a living.....?”**

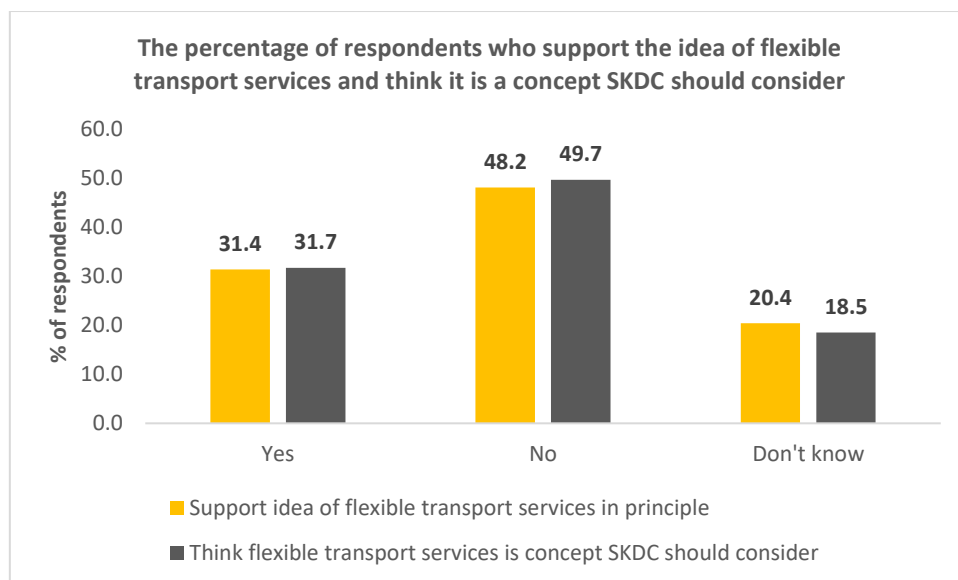
**“The cost-of-living crisis isn't taxi driver exempt. They are trying to earn a living to support themselves and their families. Their time is just as valuable as everyone else's.”**

### **Flexible Transport Services**

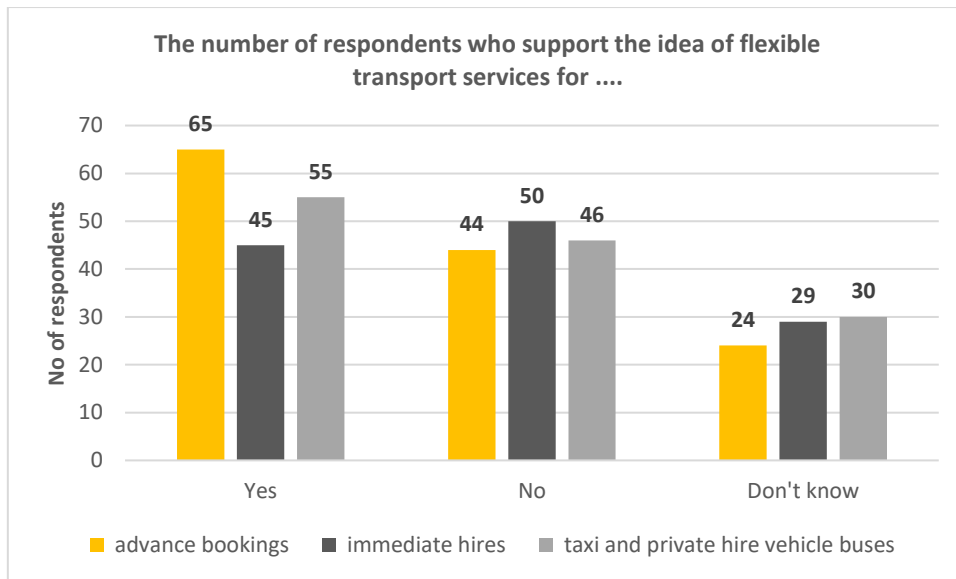
27. The fifth and final proposal respondents were asked about was the concept of flexible transport services. SKDC would like to understand if there is a demand in South Kesteven to promote flexible transport services.

28. These are journeys in taxis and/ or private hire vehicles which are shared.
- For advance bookings, the operator or person taking the booking takes the initiative to match up passengers for pre-booking. Each person using the vehicle would incur a separate fare, which would be lower than an individual hiring.
  - For immediate hires, a scheme could be set up by SKDC where licensed hackney carriages (taxis - not private hire vehicles) can be hired by individuals at ranks or other designated locations for a separate fare.
  - This initiative also includes a 'restricted public service vehicle operator licence' which owners of taxis and private hire vehicles would be able to apply for. The vehicle owner can then use it to provide a bus service for up to 8 passengers.

29. When asked if they would support the introduction of flexible transport services in principle, and if it was something they thought the Council should consider, similar proportions of respondents - 31.4% and 31.7% respectively - said that they did. Just under half of respondents - 48.2% and 49.7% - said that they didn't. Around a fifth of respondents didn't know – 20.4% or 18.5%. These percentages are illustrated in the clustered bar chart below:



30. Those who thought flexible transport services is something that the Council should consider were asked if they supported them for each of the different types of provision. There was more support for it in relation to advance bookings and for taxi and private hire vehicle buses, than for immediate hires. This is illustrated in the graph overleaf:



31. These responses do however need to be viewed in the context of the responses to the previous question. Around half of respondents didn't support the introduction of these types of service, and as such didn't answer this question.

32. An analysis of the free text responses illustrates the difference of opinion that exists about this concept. Some, like this person, are in favour of anything that has the potential to reduce fares:

**“Concerning Stamford taxis, doing anything that will make the fares more affordable is worth pursuing....”**

Others are totally opposed to the idea, on safety or health grounds as illustrated here:

**“This is a definite no from me. As a mother with two children, if I order a taxi, I don't want to be sharing a taxi with a complete stranger.”**

**“Not everyone likes to share. You don't know if the other person has health issues that could affect them if they are to share a taxi with someone they don't know. This is a ridiculous idea.”**

## Demographics

33. Respondents were asked to identify if they were a licence holder or an operator, someone who lives in the district, responding on behalf of a town or parish council or other public sector organisation or a community or voluntary group. Responses were received from various stakeholders including hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence holders – both drivers and operators, district residents, town and parish councils, public sector organisations and voluntary groups and organisations.
34. Just under one in ten responses (18 or 9.6%) were from private hire vehicle operators, just over half (104 or 55.6%) were from a licence holder – either a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle or a driver. Two thirds of responses were from those living in South Kesteven (123 or 65.8%)<sup>3</sup>.
35. Just under three quarters of those responding were male (138 or 73.4%). Around a fifth of respondents (42 or 22.3%) were female. 8 respondents (4.3%) chose the “prefer not to say” option.
36. Responses were received from those aged 18 and over. Most respondents were aged between 35 and 64 (137 or 72.9%).
37. Just over one in ten respondents (23 or 12.5%) said that they had a disability.
38. Three fifths of responses (91 or 61.5%) were received from respondents in the Grantham area -NG31. Responses were also received from the three other centres of population – 6.8% were received from Stamford -PE9, 4.1% from the Deepings- PE6 and 3.4% from Bourne-PE10. 20 responses were received from postcodes outside South Kesteven – including Lincoln, Leicester and Peterborough.

## Any other comments

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that respondents were asked to tick all options that applied to them. The total number of responses to this question was 187.



39. The final question on the survey asked respondents if they had any questions or would like to comment on anything included in the survey. Most respondents used this as an opportunity to comment on the issues they were concerned about. These included:

- The requirement to operate using vehicles that are a certain age

**“Your 5-year-old ruling has made it nearly impossible to run a taxi service as the vehicles are prohibitively expensive”**

- Taxi drivers operating illegally – driving on someone else’s badge

**“Have Licensing out on a Friday and Saturday night and see how many guys are driving illegally on a friend's badge”**

- Affordability – both for those using hackney carriage and private hire vehicle services and those providing the service

**“Help the South Kesteven drivers be competitive in prices against other councils. We pay too much”**

**“I really want to know why the people of Stamford have been fobbed off with "it's policy" when complaining about the Stamford taxi prices. If the policy does not work for the people they exist for, then they must be revised.”**

Their comments are illustrated in the word cloud below:



## Conclusion

40. Stakeholders were asked what they thought about proposed amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy as part of a four-week consultation in Spring 2024.
41. Three fifths of respondents supported the amendments to the policy in respect of driver proficiency. When asked about issuing penalties in relation to documenting daily vehicle checks two thirds of respondents thought it should be zero – and treated as a warning.
42. A similar proportion of respondents (123 or 63.1%) agreed with the proposal to change the age limit for vehicles at first registration. If agreed, vehicles would have to be registered after September 2015. Support for the introduction of a maximum fare scale was lower but still more than half at 55.1%.
43. The fifth and final proposal respondents were asked about related to Flexible Transport Services. These are journeys in taxis and/ or private hire vehicles which are shared. Support for this was lower – with three in ten stating that they supported the introduction of flexible transport services in principle, and agreeing that it was something they thought the Council should consider (31.4% and 31.7% respectively).
44. The comments made in response to each of these proposals are revealing. People are either very supportive of the proposed amendments or are totally opposed to them. This is illustrated in the two comments below – about the introduction of a maximum fare scale:  
  
**“Protect customers from extortionate fares.”**  
  
**“What right do the council have to control what can be charged. What other business do they do that to?”**
45. Further analysis could be undertaken – responses could be cross tabulated against stakeholder type for example. This would help to assess if this demarcation between



responses is predominantly determined by the type of stakeholder or if there are other factors at play.

46. Members of SKDC's Licensing Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

**Prepared by Deb Wyles**

**Communication and Consultation**

**23 April 2024**

