



Licensing Committee

15 December 2025

ENV923

Report of Councillor Phillip Knowles,
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy – following receipt of feedback and review

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To consider the report and the feedback and senior management review, to be applicable with immediate effect.

Recommendations

That the Licensing Committee

- 1) Confirms any amendments it wishes to recommend to Council be made to the current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	High performing Council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no specific financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report. Subject to this policy being approved an updated list of fees and charges will be prepared for the 2026/27 financial year. These will be based on a time and motion study to ensure charges are accurately set so that The costs associated with delivering the Licensing service are recovered through licensing fees which are reviewed annually by the Council.
- 1.2 The updated fees and charges for 2026/27 would be presented to Council at their meeting on 29 January 2026 with the proposal to implement them from the 1 February 2026 to ensure that any applicants who apply or renew a licence prior to the commencement of the new financial year are not disadvantaged.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 Whilst each individual licensing application or enforcement decision will be judged on its own merits, a Policy ensures a transparent and consistent approach to licensing that will reduce the opportunity for challenge through the Courts. Any departure from the Policy should be based on material evidence and documented giving clear and compelling reasons.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Community Safety

- 1.4 Whilst each individual licensing application or enforcement decision will be judged on its own merits, a Policy ensures a transparent and consistent approach to

licensing. Any departure from the Policy should be based on material evidence and documented giving clear and compelling reasons.

Completed by: Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Service- Public Protection

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.5 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken for the proposed updated Street Trading policy. No significant negative impacts. See Appendix 1.

Completed by: Heather Green, Licensing Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy ("the Policy") was adopted and became operational in June 2024 following updated Guidance issued by The Department for Transport ("DfT") in November 2023. The Policy is fundamental to protecting public safety and keeping people from harm and provides the framework upon which the Authority delivers its statutory functions relating to hackney carriage and private hire licensing.
- 2.2 The November 2023 DfT response document is non-statutory best practice guidance and complements the statutory standards.
- 2.3 Feedback has been ongoing and resulted in various updates being brought to Committee (links to reports are in Background Papers) this feedback related to:
 - **Fees & driver recruitment** – the cost of licensing with South Kesteven
 - **English Test** – why someone who has lived in England all their life needs to demonstrate they have a qualification or undertake an English test
 - **Driver proficiency Test** - why existing drivers, without any complaints about their driving, should be required to undertake a driver proficiency test
 - **Cross border/out of area licensed drivers** - the impact on business due to potentially cheaper/less regulated regimes operated by other Licensing Authorities, as there is no national taxi policy or charging regime.
- 2.4 Senior management have considered the impact of both fees and out of area licensing and appreciate the tight market that our licensed drivers and operators work within. Time and motion studies, as well as benchmarking with other local authority licensing regimes has been undertaken.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Licensing Authorities are responsible for deciding their own policy and making decisions on individual licensing matters, applying the relevant law and any other relevant considerations. Licensing authorities must give due regard to the Statutory

Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards 2020 (updated 25 November 2022) and Updated Guidance (November 2023), the latter being guidance as opposed to statutory.

- 3.2 Any amendments to update the existing Policy recommended by the Licensing Committee will require approval by Full Council.
- 3.3 To pro-actively support the South Kesteven licensed drivers, operators and vehicle owners the following amendments to the policy are proposed:

- **Knowledge Test** – Removal of the knowledge test requirement, removing a cost for new applicants. (Part 3 – Drivers (3.4) of the Policy, Page 20/21)

The rationale for this is based upon the fact that out of area drivers will not have this understand and with the prevalence of navigational aids this is potentially an unnecessary requirement, and it does not apply to renewing drivers.

As part of the knowledge test, Officers do currently question the driver around their understanding of the highway code and policy, which would not be undertaken if this element was removed from the policy.

- **English Test** – This is to remain in the policy as current, however the cost will be subsidised by SKDC for all first tests. If a first test is failed, then further tests will be chargeable. (changing Appendix C – Application Procedures, 3 – Driver Qualification (3.1 and 3.2) of the Policy, Pages 53 & 54)

The rationale for retaining this test is based upon the DfT guidance outlining that language proficiency assists drivers in their work and passenger understanding.

- **New drivers entering the profession** - The provision of a 1 year licence for drivers entering the profession

This supports feedback relating to difficulty recruiting new drivers. The Statutory Taxi Standards (3.2 Duration of Licences) outlines what a shorter than 3 year duration can be considered:

“Any shorter duration licence should only be issued when the licensing authority thinks it is appropriate in the specific circumstances of the case. If a licensee has requested one, or where required (for example, when the licence holder’s leave to remain in the UK is time-limited) or when the licence is only required to meet a short-term demand – they should not be issued on a probationary basis.”

- **Delegated Authority** – for the Constitution to be amended enabling delegated approval to enable the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder to make minor changes to the policy.

- 3.4 There have been minor numbering and wording updates, where previous errors have been found as well as an update to the use of a third party to complete DBS Enhanced checks, as SK is no longer a Responsible Authority (the number of DBS

check numbers per year were below the DBS threshold following the introduction of the online DBS Update Service). A list of all updates is detailed in Appendix 2.

- 3.5 A copy of the updated draft policy is attached as Appendix 3 with proposed amendments highlighted in **red**.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 To retain the Council's existing Policy, unamended.
- 4.2 To recommend some or all the amendments to the existing Policy to Full Council for approval

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The policy supports the Council in fulfilling its statutory duties associated with the licensing of hackney carriage and private hire trades.
- 5.2 It also reflects feedback and supports our local trade during this difficult economic time.
- 5.3 The changes compliment the review of fees as part of the annual fee setting process that will be considered by full Council.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 [Licensing Committee Report - Feedback update June 2024.pdf](#)
- 6.2 [Licensing Committee - Update re new Policy impacts - November 2024.pdf](#)
- 6.3 [Taxi Policy June 2024.pdf](#)

7. Appendix

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Equality and Diversity
- 7.2 Appendix 2 – List of all areas updated
- 7.3 Appendix 3 – Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy