

# RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION



## Decision taken by individual Cabinet member

*(All sections must be completed (mark "N/A" as applicable))*

### DECISION MAKER

Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder

### DECISION AND THE REASON(S) FOR IT

As per the officer recommendations in report number OS2609, to amend the taxi licensing policy to require first time applicants to submit their applications in full with all required submissions with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026, and to amend the knowledge test session to allow for this change to be implemented as per the recommendation. Also to amend the policy as recommended to ensure that English tests are only accepted where the identity of the individual passing the test has been confirmed.

To reduce the officer hours and therefore the cost of dealing with incomplete applications in accordance with the previous decision on review of licensing fees and the consultation which has commenced, and to ensure that drivers who are licensed meet the required level of English speaking, reading, writing and listening.

**DATE DECISION TAKEN** 24/03/26

### ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

*(Those examined by officers and generated by consultation, etc)*

### ANY CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

*(conflict of interests of any executive member who is consulted by the officer which relates to the decision. A note of dispensation should be attached).*

N/A



**Signed: Christine Guinness**  
(Decision maker)

**Designation:** Pride in Place/Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder

**Signed:**  
(On Consultation)

**Designation:**

**17<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2026**

**Key Decision? No**

**Report No. OS2609**

**PROPOSED VARIATION TO THE  
COUNCIL'S TAXI LICENSING POLICY**

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This report sets out a proposed variation to the taxi licensing policy, to reduce officer time and therefore to provide for cost recovery where possible in accordance with the current consultation on licence fees. It also suggests a minor variation to deal with an identified issue with English Testing, to provide clarity for applicants.

The Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder is requested to approve the recommended amendments to policy.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The licensing team have identified a change in process that would reduce officer time on new driver applications and therefore reduce the costs of processing these applications. The current fees and charges review and decision on the fees to be consulted on took account of the potential process change. The proposed process would require a change in policy as outlined in this report.
- 1.2. A further change is proposed following a number of online English Tests being submitted by applicants, whereby the provider does not check the identity of the individual taking the test. In this case we cannot be sure that the applicant meets the required level of English reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- 1.3. The Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder is requested to approve the recommended amendments to policy.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. The Council's Taxi Licensing Policy currently allows applicants for a hackney carriage and/or private hire drivers licence to submit the relevant requirements on a piecemeal basis over a period of 3 months. A number of applicants make an application and then fail to submit the relevant requirements. The current policy and scheme of delegation then require the Licensing Officer to escalate

the application to the Licensing Manager for determination by way of producing a report. The Licensing Manager then makes the relevant determination in respect of the application. Where that decision is to refuse, consultation takes place with the Chair of the Licensing and Business Committee.

- 2.2. The process outlined above takes a significant amount of officer time. As applications where the relevant submissions are not received are generally refused and payment of driver licensing fees is due on grant of a licence in accordance with the legislation, the Licensing Authority receives no payment from the applicant to cover these costs.
- 2.3. The current policy was implemented in April 2023 following a full review of the taxi licensing policy. Since then 34 new driver applicants have been refused, with a further 30 applications in the process of being escalated.
- 2.4. In accordance with the scheme of delegation, decisions in respect of policy updates are made by the relevant Portfolio Holder.

### **3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSALS**

- 3.1. Given the above a change to the policy is suggested to require all new hackney carriage and/or private hire driver licences applications to be submitted in full with all relevant submissions.
- 3.2. It is proposed that the below paragraphs of the policy are changed to read as follows:

#### ***4.18 Incomplete and/or piecemeal applications and time sensitive documents***

*4.19 The licensing authority will not accept documents for an application for a first-time licence on a piecemeal basis. For an application to be accepted and considered valid, the application form and all required submissions must be provided together. On application to renew any licence the licensing authority will accept documentation on a piecemeal basis, provided that all required submissions are made before the expiry date of the current licence.*

- 3.3. Paragraphs 4.21 – 4.24 could be removed, as they would no longer be applicable given the above proposed change.
- 3.4. This will also require a change in the policy in respect of the taking of the various in-house knowledge tests, as these would need to be taken before an application is submitted. However, this would also allow applicants more time to gain the required knowledge, which would provide for more flexibility for them.
- 3.5. In this regard it is proposed that the below paragraphs of the policy are changed to read as follows:

*5.196 For the reasons outlined below, the licensing authority will maintain and require all first-time applicants to pass the following separate and distinct tests (test elements 1-4) within the 3 months prior to making an application. Whilst discrete and separately marked, these tests are collectively and colloquially known as ‘the Knowledge’ tests.*

*5.223 Invigilators will establish the identity of all candidates sitting any test before it commences. Candidates must show suitable photographic documentary evidence (e.g., passport or photographic driving licence) to prove that they are the same person who registered for the test.*

- 3.6. Paragraph 5.256 (b) could be removed, as it would no longer be applicable in light of the above proposed changes.
- 3.7. Recently, the licensing authority have seen an increase in English Certificates being submitted by applicants for a hackney carriage or private hire drivers licence, whereby the test has been taken online with no verification as to who has taken / passed the test. In order to provide clarity to applicants, and to ensure that those we licence do meet the required level of English reading, writing, speaking and listening, it is proposed that an additional section (c) is added, as follows:

And; (c) confirmation is available that the identity of the individual who took and achieved the qualification was confirmed as the individual named on the certificate.

- 3.8. It is recommended that the changes are implemented for applications made from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

### **Consultation**

- 3.9. There has been no consultation on the recommended updates to the policy as they are not considered to have a significant impact.

## **4. IMPLICATIONS (of proposed course of action)**

### **Risks**

- 4.1. There are no risks associated with this report.

### **Legal Implications**

- 4.2. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

### **Financial Implications**

- 4.3. The proposed changes will reduce the cost to the Council of determining incomplete applications and therefore mean that the licensing authority will be operating as close to cost recovery as possible, in accordance with the recent review of the fees and charges.

## **Resource Implications**

- 4.4 The proposed changes will reduce the resources required to deal with incomplete applications, allowing for resources to be utilised more effectively.

## **Equalities Impact Implications**

- 4.5 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 To allow for better cost recovery and in accordance with the decision in the recent fees review the Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder is requested to approve the recommended amendments to policy.

### **LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:**

None

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

None

### **CONTACT DETAILS:**

**Report Author** – Shelley Bowman, [shelley.bowman@rushmoor.gov.uk](mailto:shelley.bowman@rushmoor.gov.uk), 01252 398162  
**Head of Service** – James Duggin, [james.duggin@rushmoor.gov.uk](mailto:james.duggin@rushmoor.gov.uk), 01252 398543