

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION



Decision taken by individual Cabinet member (delete as appropriate)

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

DECISION MAKER *Cllr Christine Guinness – Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder*

DECISION AND THE REASON(S) FOR IT

To amend the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy in accordance with the officers recommendation.

Whilst climate change and environmental standards are a consideration for the local authority, the purpose of taxi licensing is about public safety. This means ensuring that there are enough suitable vehicles available for all passengers, including those who require a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

The policy change balances the need for both. Whilst it reduces the standard by 1 iteration for hackney carriage vehicles being licensed for the first time, the standards on renewals of vehicles remain the same, therefore we are not allowing vehicles with lower emission standards than we do currently, and any vehicle licensed for the first time under the changed policy would still need to be replaced at the same time as those which have been licensed for some time with the same emissions standard.

DATE DECISION TAKEN 12/01/26

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

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

None

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).

Signed _____
(Decision maker)

Signed _____
(Cabinet member consultee where applicable)

Designation _____

17th DECEMBER 2025

Key Decision? No

Report No. OS2517

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

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report sets out a request received from a member of the taxi trade to amend the current taxi licensing policy. The relevant considerations in respect of the proposals have been identified and detailed in this report.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The licensing authority have received a request from a licensed hackney carriage and private hire driver, who has been licensed with Rushmoor Borough Council since 1999. The request is given at **appendix A**.
- 1.2. The driver is asking that the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy is amended in respect of Hackney Carriage Vehicles, to allow vehicles which have a Euro 5 emissions standard to be licensed on initial licence which is not permitted by the current policy.
- 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 requires Hackney Carriage vehicles to be purpose-built taxis or converted vehicles which are wheelchair accessible and meet our specification. It requires all vehicles that are licensed with Rushmoor Borough Council for the first time to meet the current European Emission Standards (Euro 6). The relevant excerpt of the policy is given below:

6.93. Environmental vehicle standards

6.94. General environmental policy approach

6.95. In recognition of the Council's wider role and its climate change objectives the licensing authority seeks to promote and encourage vehicle proprietors to invest in vehicles and related technologies that offer the best environmental standards in terms of emissions, the use of cleaner fuels / power, fuel, and engine efficiency (i.e., performance) etc.

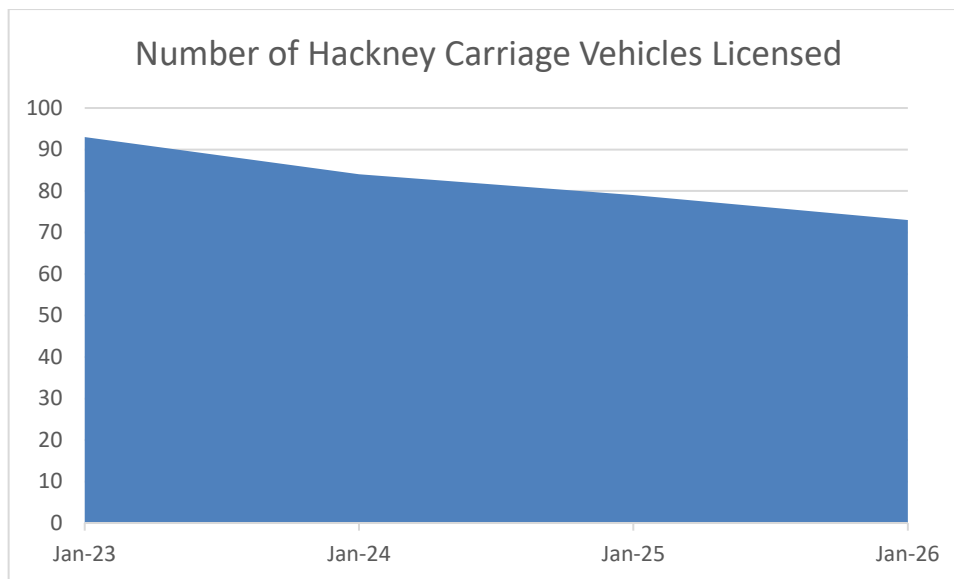
6.96. Vehicle emissions standard requirements

6.97. In view of the above and, by way of encouraging a more sustainable, environmentally friendly, and efficient taxi fleet and, subject to all other requirements being met, vehicles will only be licensed as a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle where –

(a) on first time application, the vehicle is electric or otherwise meets, the extant European Emission Standards established on approximation of Council Directive 70/156/EEC of 6 February 1970 (or extant equivalent) in force at the time the application is made; or

(b) on renewal, the vehicle meets the emission standards as set out and defined within two iterations (2i) of the extant European Emission Standards in force at the time the application is made. For example, where the extant European Emission Standard at the time of application for renewal is Euro 6, the vehicle must meet at least Euro 4 emission standards.

- 2.2. The current European Emissions policy was implemented in April 2023 when the requirement for Hackney Carriages to be brand new on initial licence was removed, as a vehicle can be used and well maintained, therefore providing a more cost-effective means of entering the hackney carriage trade.
- 2.3. Since the implementation of the current policy requirement, we have seen a slow but steady decline in the number of hackney carriage vehicles licensed in Rushmoor, and therefore in wheelchair accessible vehicles (we currently have 4 wheelchair accessible licensed private hire vehicles). As shown on the following graph:



- 2.4. The driver making the request has stated that it is not currently cost effective to purchase a purpose-built or converted taxi vehicle which meets the Euro 6 emissions standard and is therefore asking that the policy is amended to allow vehicles that meet the Euro 5 emissions standard to be licensed as hackney carriages on first time application.
- 2.5. The policy allows vehicles once licensed to continue to be licensed, subject to the relevant standards, until they are no longer within two iterations of the current euro emission standard, meaning that there are currently Euro 5 vehicles licensed as Hackney Carriages.
- 2.6. In making a recommendation, consideration has been given to the need to meet climate change objectives, whilst balancing the need to provide a suitable range and number of vehicles to ensure that there are vehicles available to service the needs of residents and visitors to Rushmoor, including those who need to travel in a wheelchair, and taking account of the foreword within the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy, which sets out the licensing authorities aims in regulating taxi services.
- 2.7. 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 driver's submission that it is not cost effective to purchase a purpose-built or converted taxi vehicle which meets the Euro 6 emissions standard, an online search has been carried out to identify vehicles. The only purpose-built wheelchair accessible taxi vehicle that is a Euro 6 is the LEVC Electric Vehicle which is referred to in the driver's email. The prices of used ones of these range from £29,995 to £54,995. The models prior to this one are Euro 5.
- 3.2. An online search for used wheelchair accessible converted taxi vehicles meeting the Euro 6 emissions standard showed a very limited number of

vehicles available in the makes and models that we know meet our specification. However, there may be other vehicles available that have not been inspected against our specification as we have not had a request to do so.

- 3.3. The purpose of our taxi licensing service is to enable good business for all concerned, whilst reasonably ensuring the safety and protection of the public and other road users and providing a good quality and efficient public transportation service for all; and the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy recognises that too restrictive an approach can potentially create barriers of entry to the trade, restricting the supply of taxi services, and subsequently having unintended safety implications e.g. resulting in insufficient taxis to ensure the vulnerable get home safely.
- 3.4. Given the above, to prevent a barrier of entry to the hackney carriage trade, ensure that there are sufficient wheelchair accessible vehicles, and hackney carriages available at the ranks which do not require pre-booking, whilst maintaining the renewal / replacement of vehicles as new emission standards are introduced, it is recommended that the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy be amended in respect of Hackney Carriages only to the following:

Vehicle emissions standard requirements

In view of the above and, by way of encouraging a more sustainable, environmentally friendly, and efficient taxi fleet and, subject to all other requirements being met, vehicles will only be licensed as a private hire vehicle where –

(a) on first time application, the vehicle is electric or otherwise meets, the extant European Emission Standards established on approximation of Council Directive 70/156/EEC of 6 February 1970 (or extant equivalent) in force at the time the application is made; or

(b) on renewal, the vehicle meets the emission standards as set out and defined within two iterations (2i) of the extant European Emission Standards in force at the time the application is made. For example, where the extant European Emission Standard at the time of application for renewal is Euro 6, the vehicle must meet at least Euro 4 emission standards.

Taking account of the specification for hackney carriage vehicles, and to encourage sufficient wheelchair accessible vehicles, and vehicles available at the taxi ranks without prior booking, vehicles will only be licensed as a hackney carriage vehicle where –

(a) on first time application, the vehicle meets the emission standards as set out and defined within one iteration (1i) of the extant European Emission Standards in force at the time the application is made. For example, where the extant European Emission Standard at the time of application for renewal is Euro 6, the vehicle must meet at least Euro 5 emission standards; or

(b) on renewal, the vehicle meets the emission standards as set out and defined within two iterations (2i) of the extant European Emission Standards in force at the time the application is made. For example, where the extant European Emission Standard at the time of application for renewal is Euro 6, the vehicle must meet at least Euro 4 emission standards.

- 3.5. It is proposed that the changes are implemented with immediate effect.

Consultation

- 3.6. 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. The proposed change is likely to result in an increase in Euro 5 licensed vehicles working within Rushmoor which would have some impact on the emissions created by the licensed taxi trade as a whole. However, this needs to be balanced with the risk of the current policy remaining as is, which is a likely factor in the decline of hackney carriages and therefore wheelchair accessible vehicles. This could result in a lack of availability of suitable vehicles for those needing to travel in a wheelchair, and a lack of immediately available vehicles at the taxi ranks / on road, which may have safety implications for vulnerable people.

Legal Implications

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

Financial Implications

- 4.3. There are no financial implications for the Council associated with this report. There is however a financial benefit for those wishing to enter, return or remain in the hackney carriage trade, as they will be able to purchase suitable vehicles at a lower cost.

Resource Implications

- 4.4. There are no resource implications associated with this report.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.5. The proposed change may result in an increase in wheelchair accessible vehicles, which means that there will be more availability for those with disabilities that require them to travel in their wheelchairs, as well as increased availability of vehicles at taxi ranks / available for immediate hire for all users. Failing to amend the policy may result in a further decline in the number of

wheelchair accessible taxis and availability of hackney carriages that can be hailed on the street or be hired from a taxi rank, which would be detrimental to all taxi users, a number of whom are vulnerable.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 To encourage an increase in hackney carriages and wheelchair accessible vehicles, 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

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