

LICENSING COMMITTEE



Report subject	Review of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver, Vehicle and Operator Policies
Meeting date	22 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report presents the updated policy proposals concerning the Council's taxi and private hire licences and the findings of the public consultation that was carried out between 3 March 2025 and the 28 April 2025. The current policies were adopted in June 2021, following the establishment of BCP Council. These policies are divided into three distinct areas: driver, vehicle, and operator licensing. Since their implementation, there have been updates issued by the Department for Transport to statutory standards and best practice guidance as well as legislative changes.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: Members consider the revised draft policy proposals having regard to the consultation responses and feedback. Where necessary and appropriate amend the draft policies and recommend a final version for adoption by Full Council.
Reason for recommendations	The current BCP Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policies were adopted in June 2021. In accordance with the Department of Transport - Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards 3.1 states that Licensing Authorities should review their Licensing Policies every 5 years.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Kieron Wilson – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton – Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Trudi Barlow – Licensing Officer Nananka Randle – Licensing and Trading Standards Officer
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. The proposed Taxi Licensing Policies outlines this Licensing Authority's approach to fulfilling its statutory responsibilities concerning the licensing of drivers, vehicles, and operators.
2. The policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect legislative changes, evolving best practices, and updated statutory guidance. Its primary objectives are to enhance public safety, safeguard vulnerable individuals, ensure accessibility of the vehicles, support environmental improvements, and contribute to the growth of the local economy.
3. These documents establish a clear framework of standards that will guide the Licensing Authority in the execution of its regulatory functions.
4. As a key component of the Local Authority's decision-making process, these policies serve to inform and support officers and elected members in making decisions that are fair, transparent, and consistent.

Draft Policy development

5. At the Licensing Committee meeting on 7th December 2023 the forward plan and membership of workshops to review the existing policy were agreed.
6. These workshops took place on the 23 January and 20 February 2024 and were attended by Councillors Farquar and Chapmanlaw, taxi trade representatives Mr Lane and Mrs Smith together with the Council Licensing Officers and a Legal Officer.
7. The existing policies were discussed particularly in relation to the Department of Transport [Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards \(updated November 2022\)](#) and [taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England \(updated November 2023\)](#) as well as legislative amendments.
8. The suggested amendments were incorporated, and the revised draft policies were subsequently circulated to all workshop representatives. A follow-up workshop was held on 2 July 2024, during which the final draft policy was proposed.

9. The draft policy report was presented to the Licensing Committee on 12 December 2024 for review and approval prior to the commencement of the public consultation. The Committee endorsed the report as presented. Additionally, it was agreed that the public consultation should include a question regarding the potential need for new hackney carriage vehicles to be wheelchair-accessible vehicles. The Committee also requested that the consultation document be circulated via email to Members for feedback before it is published.
10. Draft copies of the BCP Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver, Vehicle and Private Hire Operator Policies are attached at Appendix 1,2 and 3.

Public Consultation

11. The public consultation was open from 3 March to 28 April 2025. It was accessible online via the BCP website, and paper copies of the survey were available at local BCP libraries. Completed surveys could be submitted using the 'Have Your Say' boxes located in the libraries or returned by post to the Civic Centre Offices.
12. Links to the online consultation were also emailed to all BCP Taxi and Private Hire driver, vehicle and operator licence holders and key stakeholders.
13. There were two questionnaire surveys.
 - General Public Survey at Appendix 4
 - BCP Licence Holders Survey at Appendix 5

Both questionnaires were split into the three policy areas.

- Driver policy
- Vehicle policy
- Operator policy

Consultation and summary of survey feedback

14. The results from the Public Consultation are contained within the Research and Consultation Team Report date June 25 and attached at Appendix 6.
15. There were 33 responses received in total, 22 related to the General Public Survey and 11 from the BCP Licence Holders survey.

Common concerns that arose from comments in regard to all three policies.

Out of town vehicles

16. The consultation raised concerns about the number of non BCP Council licenced vehicles operating in the conurbation.
17. The Deregulation Act 2015 allows private hire operators to subcontract bookings to licensed operators in different licensing authorities whereas previously they could only subcontract bookings to licensed operators within the same licensing authority area.
18. This has expanded the scope of subcontracting beyond local boundaries and has led to the concerns expressed about the number of non-local licenced vehicles in the areas and reports from passengers that drivers do not have knowledge of local roads. These issues are not unique to the BCP Council area and are being reported in many towns and cities throughout the UK.

19. We now have private hire operators applying for licences in different areas and they can then pass work from one to the other and providing that all three licences (that is the private hire operator, vehicle and driver) are issued by the same authority then it is legitimate. It has also meant that some drivers and vehicle proprietors tend to migrate to a local authority that has more relaxed requirements and/or has lower fees.
20. Furthermore, Hackney Carriages can work for any operator anywhere in the country regardless of where they are originally licensed.
21. We have no powers to regulate or take enforcement action regarding the out-of-town vehicles and drivers when reported apart from liaising with the licensing authority to ensure their own policy standards are upheld.
22. Allegations about vehicles illegally plying for hire within the conurbation are fully investigated and will be pursued formally as necessary.

Ride Hailing Apps – Uber

23. Uber operates as a licensed private hire operator in a number of local authority areas. All affiliated vehicles and drivers are licensed by the local authority in which they are based and are subject to the same regulatory standards and compliance requirements as any other licensed operator, driver, or vehicle within that jurisdiction.
24. Uber, have until now, chosen not to apply for an operator's licence in our area and contrary to comments received it has nothing to do with them not being permitted.
25. As of August 2025, Uber has now submitted a private hire operator licence application, and this is being processed as per our policy requirements. It should be noted that as long as they meet the requirements of our policy there is no basis for refusal.

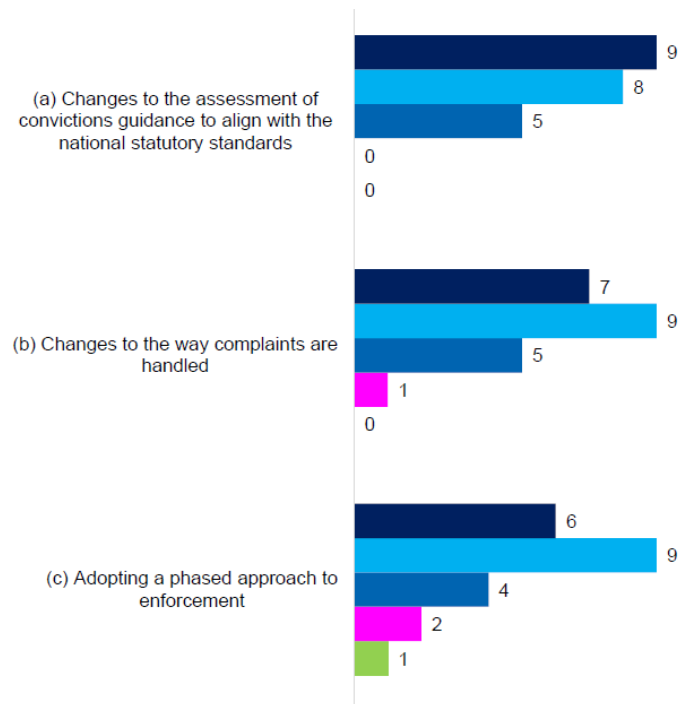
Driver Policy feedback

26. There was overall support for the Driver Policy.
27. Responses to specific questions asked are set out below:-

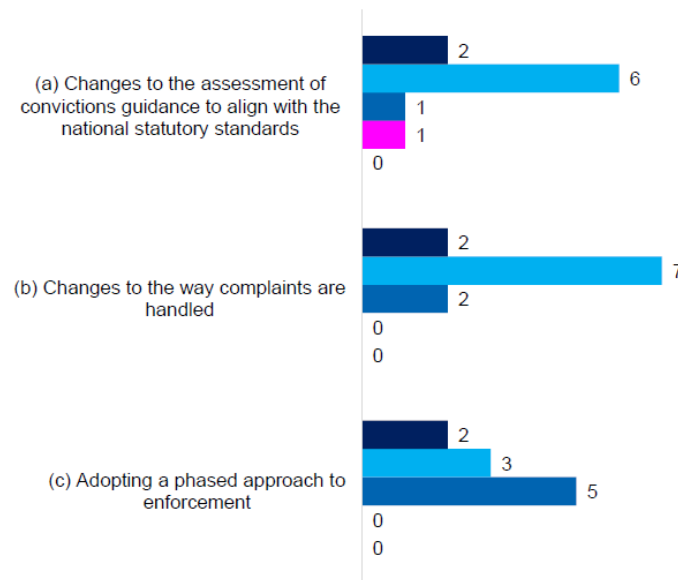
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Policy for 2025-2030?

General Public responses

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ Strongly agree | ■ Somewhat agree |
| ■ Neither agree nor disagree | ■ Somewhat disagree |
| ■ Strongly disagree | |



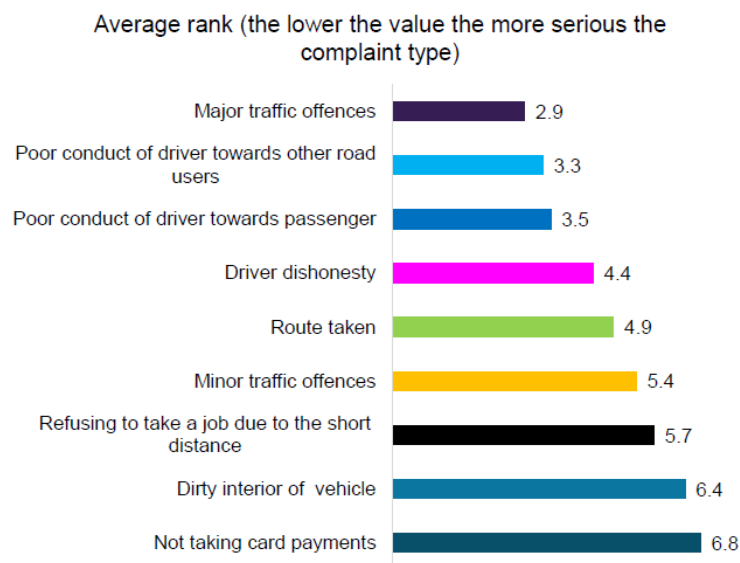
BCP Council Licence Holders Responses



28. The responses from both the public and licence holders largely agree with the changes proposed.
29. By ensuring that applicants and existing driver" convictions are assessed against national statutory standards helps to provide consistent decision making with other local authorities and is supported by statutory guidance.
30. Having a more defined phased approach to enforcement will provide anyone making a complaint with assurance that officers take appropriate actions in accordance with our processes and ensures drivers are aware of the implications of infractions when contacted by officers.

31. The phased approach will support officers' actions and decisions in each complaint and provides transparency in the decision-making processes used.

Please rank these types of complaint in order of seriousness with the most serious placed at number 1, and the least serious placed at number 9.



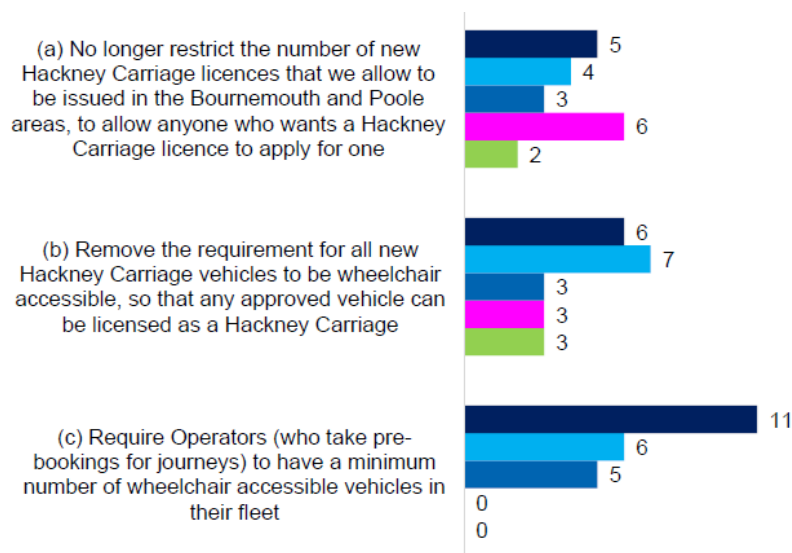
32. The consultation results support the current approach taken by officers whereby priority is given to complaints about major traffic offences and poor conduct of drivers towards other road users and passengers.

Vehicle Policy

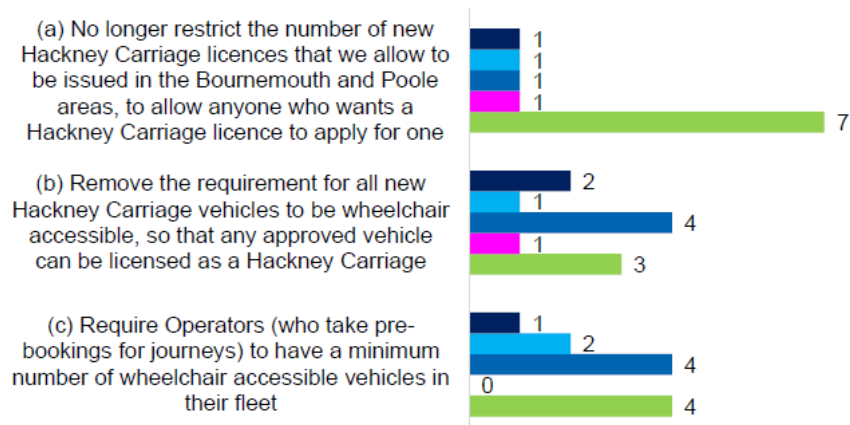
33. There was a mixed support to the vehicle policy specifically in regard to the areas concerning Hackney Carriages.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy for 2025-2030?

General Public responses



BCP Council Licence Holders Responses



34. There is a mixed response to the suggestion to remove the current limit on Hackney Carriage Licences issued, this suggestion is more supported by the general public than by the licence holders.
35. The associated comments by members of the public to this question were mixed with one person stating that anyone should have access to this type of vehicle at any time of the day or night and another stating there are already too many. There was a comment which raised a concern that by removing the limit it will increase the issue of drivers not knowing the area.
36. BCP licence holders comments suggested that the market is already flooded, there are too many vehicle already, and not enough work with long waits between jobs and by issuing more licences will reduce business for current licensed vehicles. Another comment remarks that there are plenty of standard vehicles with only wheelchair accessible vehicles being required.
37. Under the 2021 policy, 15 new Hackney Carriage wheelchair-accessible vehicles licences (WAV's) are released annually for both Bournemouth and Poole Zones. A total of 150 licences have been made available to date, however only 23 have been issued to date, all in Bournemouth. This means that currently there are 52 licences available in Bournemouth and 75 licences available in Poole. Christchurch has no restriction on vehicle licence numbers.
38. To maintain a restriction on the number of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences, the Licensing Authority must conduct an Unmet Demand Survey at least every five years. This requirement is in accordance with Section 16 of the Transport Act 1985.
39. The cost of conducting these surveys is typically in the range of £20,000 and is recovered through the annual vehicle licence fees paid by Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence holders.
40. The Department of Transport Taxi and Private Hire best practice guidance for licensing authorities document updated in November 2023 at section 9.2 states that

Most licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions. The department regards that as best practice. Where restrictions are imposed, the department

would urge that the matter should be regularly reviewed. The matter should be approached in terms of the interests of the travelling public

The proposal to remove the new hackney carriage vehicle licence quantity restriction will bring the BCP Council Policy in line with best practice.

It can be shown that lifting the restriction on numbers is unlikely to have a negative impact, as there are currently available licences that remain unallocated. The associated cost savings by not having to undertake an unmet needs survey will be incorporated into the annual Hackney Carriage vehicle licence fees.

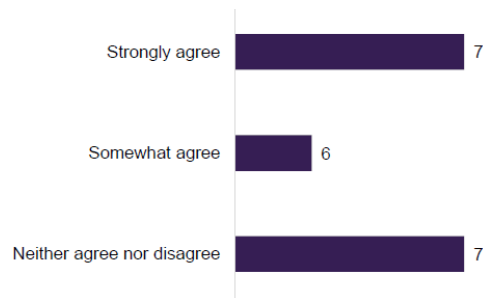
41. The suggestion relating to the removal of the requirement to ensure all new hackney carriage licences must be wheelchair accessible had more support from the general public than by licence holders, with disagreement all from both surveys.
42. Comments relating to this suggestion generally reflected the previous public comments about availability of vehicles, and the need to ensure equality in access to such vehicles. Similarly, a licence holder expressed concerns that they are expensive to maintain and are not affordable.
43. Currently the policy requires all new Hackney Carriage licences to be for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) to ensure equitable access for passengers with mobility needs.
44. To address affordability concerns for vehicle proprietors, the policy has been amended so all eligible WAVs must be Euro 6 compliant with no more than 100,000 miles on the clock, compared to the standard vehicle replacement criteria of being under five years old with no more than 60,000 miles on the clock.
45. This currently supports both inclusivity and financial feasibility. Nationally, wheelchair users represent approximately 2% of the population, and studies show they make twice as many licensed vehicle trips as non-wheelchair users.
46. By maintaining WAV availability, the policy directly improves transport accessibility for disabled passengers, enhancing independence and quality of life while making compliance more achievable for licence holders.
47. The suggestion to require private hire operators to have a minimum number of wheelchair accessible vehicles available is supported by the general public however, licence holders are less supportive and more disagree with the suggestion. Feedback comments include concerns that smaller operators may struggle as they only have 1 vehicle which would then need to be wheelchair accessible.
48. How this could be implemented in practice and enforced also needs to be carefully considered should this suggestion be included in the policy as a requirement.

Private Hire Operators

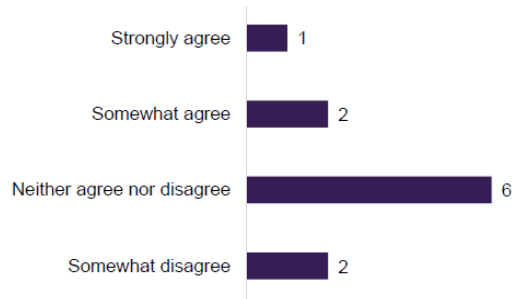
49. There was overall support for the Private Hire Operators policy.

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to the draft Private Hire Operator Policy for 2025-2030?

General Public responses



BCP Council Licence Holders Responses



50. The proposed changes to the Operators Policy were more supported by the general public than by licence holders. There was a greater number of those who neither disagreed nor agreed from both sets of respondents.
51. Comments received did not reflect the question and seemed to relate more to the general concerns already discussed.

Policy specific feedback

52. Where responses related directly to the policy we have collated the responses into the following table with suggested amendments for consideration.

Section /Para	Comment/Feedback	Suggested amendment and or officer feedback
11.2	"Regarding section 11.2, you use the term 'approved medical centre' in the new policy wording. Unless you are planning to keep a list of 'approved medical centres' then I think this term is unclear. I think the current wording is actually also ambiguous....."	Our correspondence to drivers and published on our website does state that we only accept medicals completed by the driver's normal GP OR if they are unable to make an appointment with their GP, we accept certificates from Nuffield Hospital. To avoid any ambiguity, we suggest adding highlighted wording 11.2 Group 2 medical certificates must be completed

		by the drivers own GP or BCP Council approved medical centre, with access to the driver's medical records no more than 3 months before the medical is due. For drivers who also have a lorry or bus licence we will accept a copy of the same medical subject to the requirements above.
13	From Guide dogs- See Section 8, on page 40 of consultation report for letter in full. - Disability Equality Training (DET) mandatory for all drivers - Zero tolerance: The policy should state that BCP Council will use its best endeavours to investigate all reported violations of the Equality Act 2010 in a timely manner with a view to pursuing a conviction. - Mystery shopping: The policy should state that	- All drivers are required to complete training New drivers – have to complete the NVQ course which includes a disability awareness module which all drivers have to have successfully completed before making an application. Existing Drivers – any complaints received of this nature can be asked to complete a further DET course to better understand situations. - Suggested amendment to add additional paragraph after 13.3 All reported complaints/ violations of the Equality Act 2010 will be investigated in a timely manner and according to our complaints policy (section 20). This may involve pursuing a conviction under the Equality Act. - Add additional paragraph after 13.4 Where possible the Licensing Authority shall work in conjunction

	BCP will work together in conjunction with assistance dog owners to ensure that licensing requirements are being complied with by various means such as, but not limited to, test purchases.	with assistance dog owners to ensure that licensing requirements are being complied with by various means such as, but not limited to, test purchases.
23	No mention of livery/sticker requirements for private hire vehicles that fall into exemption category.	It is suggested that paragraph 23.2 can be reworded as follows All Private hire vehicles shall ensure that they are in compliance with the Private Hire Plate and livery requirements as stated in Appendix B. Amend Appendix B to read ‘Private Hire Plate and livery requirements’. In Appendix B also insert a new section at 1 All Private Hire Vehicles shall have permanently affixed in the prescribed positions the following signage - unless they are classified under section 2 and 3 below: • Door livery – including No booking, No ride and PH licence number • Large ‘No booking No ride’ stickers on both rear passenger doors as near to the door handle as is possible either to the side or directly underneath. (they

		are clearly visible to the customer when entering the vehicle). • Small 'No booking, No ride' sticker on front passenger door as above. If the vehicle wishes to use the bus lanes in the BCP Council area a 'Chequered flag' sticker should be affixed to the offside, front of the bonnet.
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Officer observations for policy delivery

53. Whilst delivering the policy and since the draft was agreed changes in how we administer our licences have been and continue to be made. As such officers suggest the following amendments which clarify some of the processing and questions received.

54. All policies under chapter entitled Renewals as follows:

Section /Para	Current wording	Suggested amendment and or officer feedback
Renewals 9.1 and 9.4(Driver) 10.1 and 10.3 (Operator) 11.1 and 11.4 (Vehicle)	Holders of existing driver's licences must apply to renew their licence no earlier than 2 months prior and no later than ten working day prior to the expiry date. Renewal applications and all associated paperwork including online payment receipt must be submitted electronically via e-mail to taxi.privatehire@bcp.council.gov.uk,	The way licence holders submit applications will be changing shortly due to IT improvements as such the policy needs to reflect this. Holders of existing drivers licences shall ensure that they submit the renewal application and all associated paperwork electronically, no earlier than 2 months and no later than 10 working days prior to the expiry date of the

	before the licence has expired.	licence.
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Driver Policy

55. Amendments to reflect current practice and provide clarity for driver medical requirements.

Section /Para	Current wording	Suggested amendment and or officer feedback
11.2 and 11.3	11.2 Group 2 medical certificates must be completed by the drivers own GP or approved medical centre, with access to the driver's medical records no more than 3 months before the medical is due. For drivers who also have a lorry or bus licence we will accept a copy of the same medical subject to the requirements above. 11.3 New applicants should not undertake the medical examination until notified to do so during the application process. We will not accept any certificate that is dated prior to the date of application.	Regarding medicals new drivers are expected to submit a Group 2 medical submitted by their own GP however for existing drivers we do accept medicals from our approved provider. As such we seek to amend paragraphs 11.2 and 11.3 as follows 11.2 For existing drivers Group 2 medical certificates must be completed by the drivers own GP or approved medical centre, with access to the driver's medical records no more than 3 months before the medical is due. For drivers who also have a lorry or bus licence we will accept a copy of the same medical subject to the requirements above. 11.3 New applicants are required to have the Group 2 medical certificate completed by their own GP or a GP at the practice where they are registered. They should not undertake the medical examination until notified to do so during the application process.

		We will not accept any medical certificate that is dated prior to the date of their application.
13.2	Drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles must undergo additional passenger transportation training, and the evidence of this training must be supplied at renewal of both the drivers' licence and the vehicle licence. If expired this must be updated in the three months before the driver renews their licence, the new certificate will be submitted as part of the renewal process.	Paragraph 13.2 we suggest deleting the final sentence regarding the expiry of the certificate as this is deal with by the vehicle policy requirements. 13.2 Drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles must undergo additional passenger transportation training, and the evidence of this training must be supplied at renewal of both the drivers' licence and the vehicle licence.
16.4	When new drivers collect their licence for the first time, they will be required to sign a declaration that they have read and understood the conditions. A copy of this policy and all accompanying appendices will be issued to them.	It is suggested to amend this to delete wording that no longer applies. Copies of the policy are not provided in hard cop, a weblink to the documents is provided instead. 16.4 When new drivers collect their licence for the first time, they will be required to sign a declaration that they have read and understood the licence conditions and policy.

Vehicle Policy

56. Amendments to clarify requirements to submit vehicle mechanical check documentation in good time and links to the previous convictions policy amendments.

Section /Para	Current wording	Suggested amendment and or officer feedback
8.3	Failure to complete the MEC within two months of the due date will result in the vehicle licence being revoked.	Failure to complete the MEC or MoT within two months of the due date will result in the vehicle licence being revoked.
12.1	The applicant/licence holder must declare any previous criminal convictions, cautions and fixed penalty notices received, including those awaiting appeal, and any charges pending. The council will make a decision as to the relevance of convictions, cautions, charges and fixed penalty notices in accordance with criminal convictions guidelines.	The applicant/licence holder must declare any previous criminal convictions, cautions and fixed penalty notices received, including those awaiting appeal, and any charges pending in line with the assessment of previous convictions annexe of the Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards - GOV.UK

Operators Policy

57. Paragraph 7.11 with the increase in online and APP based operators we need to reflect that an actual premises office is not always required as long as an address is provided so that officers can inspect records if needed.

Section /Paragraph	Current wording	Suggested amendment and or officer feedback
7.11	Applicants must specify the address from which they will operate, and records can be inspected. These premises must	Officers will accept applications that include a 'virtual office' address as long as evidence of a contract/lease is

	be in the BCP Council conurbation and where necessary should have planning consent for use as a Private Hire office. PO box, solicitors, accountants, or care of addresses will not be accepted.	provided. This means officers can still meet operators and inspect records as necessary.
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Options Appraisal

58. Members are asked to consider the consultation report and feedback received and decide whether:

- to amend the draft policy after consideration of the consultation feedback and agree a final version or
- after consideration retain the current version of draft policy.

59. Reasons should be given for any amendments made.

60. Once all feedback has been discussed members are asked to agree a final version of the Policy to be recommended to Full Council.

Summary of financial implications

61. Any fees incurred will be absorbed within current budgets. Any costs associated with the review process will be covered by the income from the fees.

Summary of legal implications

62. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policies are not statutory. This means that there is no requirement for the Council to adopt one, however it is good practice to do so as it sets out the Council's approach to issuing licences and enforcement. Decisions made in accordance with the policy are more likely to be upheld in the event of an appeal. A good policy ensures consistency of approach by the council thus ensuring fairness and transparency for both the licence holders and public alike.

Summary of human resources implications

63. There are no implications on human resources the current licensing team will continue to implement the policy within current resource levels

Summary of sustainability impact

64. From 1 January 2025 all licenced vehicles met the specified minimum emission standards of the policy.

65. The current policy requires that any vehicle that does not meet Euro 6 emission standard would not be renewed after 31 December 2023. As licences are issued

for a year the last vehicles which did not meet this emission criteria had to be replaced by the end of December 2024.

Summary of public health implications

66. The policies currently and as proposed focus on protecting and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Summary of equality implications

67. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and was rated as green by the EIA review panel on 24 September 2025. Appendix 7.

Summary of risk assessment

68. There is a risk of judicial review should any new policy be challenged. The Committee must ensure that any decisions are made with reference to the public sector equality duty.

Background papers

[Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards - GOV.UK](#)

[Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1- Draft BCP Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Policy

Appendix 2 - Draft BCP Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy

Appendix 3 - Draft BCP Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Operator Policy

Appendix 4 - General public survey questions

Appendix 5 - BCP Licence holders survey questions

Appendix 6 - Consultation report

Appendix 7 – Equalities Impact Assessment Report and Action Plan