

MANDATORY SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR LICENSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Monica Stringfellow
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Wilkes - Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcome of the recent 12-week consultation with relevant stakeholders and members of the public on the proposal to introduce mandatory safeguarding awareness training and refresher training for all Redditch Borough Council licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers and ask that the recommendations as set out below be considered and approved.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are asked to:

Note the contents of the report, and in particular the public consultation results at Appendix 1; and

Approve amendment to the existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licensing Policy, as set out below:

- i. Introduce mandatory safeguarding awareness training for all existing licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers, to commence from 1st July 2025.**
- ii. Introduce three yearly mandatory safeguarding awareness refresher training for all licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers on renewal.**

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Consultation on the two proposed policy amendments took place over a 12-week period. It comprised of a survey which was available to complete online via the Council's website and was promoted by the Council's Communications Team, across a range of channels.

Information on the consultation, along with details on how to respond were sent directly to:

- Redditch Borough Council licensed drivers, vehicle proprietors and private hire operators
- National Private Hire and Taxi Association
- Licensed Private Hire Car Association
- West Mercia Police
- Safer Roads Partnership
- West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
- Worcestershire County Council - Relevant contacts at Worcestershire County Council, including those responsible for safeguarding children and adults and arranging home to school transport
- Relevant interest groups, including those that represent people with disabilities and the elderly
- Relevant local business groups
- District, Town and Parish Councillors

3.2 In total there were 33 responses received to the online survey. Of the 33 respondents, 28 were holders of a taxi/private hire driver licence, 3 were users of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and 1 response was from a local councillor. A further response was also received from a Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services.

3.3 In response to question 3, 27.27% of respondents indicated that they agree with the Councils proposal to introduce mandatory safeguarding awareness training for all existing hackney carriage and private hire drivers as a requirement for renewing their licence. 72.73% disagreed.

3.4 There were 21 detailed responses received in relation to making the training mandatory, with the majority of the respondents questioning the proposal to implement Refresher Training. Six of the nineteen respondents were in favour and some held a neutral opinion.

3.5 In summary, the consultation results from those who expanded on their responses, highlighted a mixed reaction to the introduction of safeguarding awareness refresher training for all existing licence holders from 1 July 2025. However, many of the comments made for not undertaking the training focussed on time and cost to the driver not on the actual content and benefits of the training itself. Where there were those in agreement the comments highlighted the positive impact, it would have on public safety and the positivity of having the awareness of changes in legislation.

- 3.6 Officers are aware that some drivers will have undertaken safeguarding training previously and the proposed 3-yearly update will reflect changes in guidance and legislation. The cost of the updated provision to supply these important updates would be kept to a minimum, improving standards for our drivers, service users and the Council.
- 3.7 The cost of this mandatory safeguarding training is £20.00 per applicant and will cover the 3-year licensing period. This is considered very good value, and therefore any consideration of the Council subsidising the cost of this training has been discounted. This also creates a consistent approach to applying this policy to all drivers.

4. Summary

- 4.1 In September 2022, in response to the publication of the Department of Transport's "Taxi & Private Hire Standards" the Council adopted and published a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy ("taxi policy"), which introduced a requirement for all new drivers to undertake appropriate safeguarding awareness training, as part of a wider programme of driver training, entitled the 'Competency Certificate'.
- 4.2 Following further consideration of the "Taxi & Private Hire Standards" in relation to driver training, members of this Committee received a report in October 2024 proposing two further amendments to the taxi policy, these being
- 4.3 With effect from 1 July 2025 each time an existing licence holder renews their licence they must undertake safeguarding training delivered by the Council's approved training provider prior to submitting their renewal application. That all licensed hackney carriage and private hire drivers must then undertake safeguarding awareness refresher training, every three years thereafter.
- 4.4 In June 2024 this Committee supported the principle of the two proposed amendments and approved the undertaking of a 12-week consultation exercise with trade members, key stakeholders, and the public, with the results being presented to Committee for consideration.
- 4.5 This report now presents the results of the consultation exercise, which can be found at **Appendix 1** and recommends to Members that the amendments as set out in the revised extract from the Council's current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, which can be seen at **Appendix 2**. Be approved and implemented.

Financial Implications

- 3.10 The costs of the safeguarding awareness training itself will be met by the licence holder. Officers are working closely with the training provider to keep costs to a minimum and at cost recovery.

Legal Implications

- 3.11 The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Standards have been published by the Department for Transport under the powers set out in section 177 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017.
- 3.12 Consultation on the proposals referred to in this report to amend this Council's policy was undertaken with licence holders, relevant stakeholders, and the general public over a 12-week period.
- 3.13 Appropriate consultation on any proposals to amend the Council's policies minimises the risk of legal challenge if the proposals are subsequently implemented.
- 3.14 The Department for Transport "Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice guidance" further states:

"It is good practice for local authorities to consult about any significant proposed changes in licensing rules. Such consultation should include not only the taxi and PHV trades but also groups likely to be the trades' customers. Examples are groups representing disabled people, or Chambers of Commerce, organisations with a wider transport interest (eg the Campaign for Better Transport and other transport providers), women's' groups or local traders"

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There is a possible reputational risk to the Council, as the new hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy, introduced in September 2022, only introduced the Competency Certificate to new drivers. Although it was not intended to cause any issues the Council may want to mitigate any risk by ensuring all drivers are in some way exposed to safeguarding awareness training to protect the travelling public.
- 4.2 When introducing new, or amending existing Council policy, it is recommended that public and stakeholder consultation is undertaken on that policy, to minimise any risk of legal challenge. The Department for Transport "Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice guidance" further states

“It is good practice for local authorities to consult about any significant proposed changes in licensing rules. Such consultation should include not only the taxi and PHV trades but also groups likely to be the trades’ customers. Examples are groups representing disabled people, or Chambers of Commerce, organisations with a wider transport interest (eg the Campaign for Better Transport and other transport providers), women’s’ groups or local traders”

Having considered the above a full 12-week consultation has taken place with licence holders, key stakeholders and the general public, with the results being considered by Members prior to the amendment of the Council’s Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licensing Policy.

5. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Consultation responses
- Appendix 2 – Amended Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy extract

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Department for Transport guidance under section 177 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 entitled “**Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Standards.**” [Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/statutory-taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-standards)

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