

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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**HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER LICENCE
APPLICATION PROCESS CHECKS**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor M. Stringfellow
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Wilkes – Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Report Author	Job Title: Licensing and Support Services Manager Contact email: Kiran.Lahel@worcsregservices.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01562 738067
Wards Affected	Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	N/A
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the content of the report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of ongoing monitoring checks within the Licensing team there are processes that occasionally need refinement in response to both legislative and technological changes. As part of recent internal monitoring the team have acknowledged that the requirements set out in the 2022 Taxi Standards have clearly strengthened safeguarding checks and internal procedures. As a result, there has been a domino effect of extra officer checks being undertaken by the licensing team which is somewhat underestimated by Members and the wider public.
- 2.2 This information report sets out the process for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver licences with a particular focus on how the process has evolved through the implementation of the requirements set out in the Statutory Taxi Standards.
- 2.3 The Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy sets out the criteria that any applicant must meet in order to obtain a driver licence and can be seen at **Appendix 1**. The policy relating to driver licences is in accordance with the Government's Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards.

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3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council's policy permits applications for two types of driver licence
- A licence to drive hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, known as a "dual licence".
 - A licence to drive private hire vehicles only.

- 3.2 Driver licences are normally issued for a period of 3 years. The application process for a hackney carriage and/or private hire driver licence is relatively straight forward if followed correctly although it should not be taken for granted that the checks carried out by officers are robust and necessary to ensure the safety of the travelling public.

The application Process

- 3.3 All applicants are required to submit a full application form. This form consists of:
- A full completed application form
 - A DBS check
 - A medical certificate
 - Proof of right to work
 - Proof of payment
 - Attendance at a competency training session if applying as a new driver or attendance at a safeguarding training session if the application is for the renewal of a licence
 - Completion of the knowledge test
- 3.4 Officers are required to make necessary checks to ensure the applicant is 'fit and proper' by ensuring all elements at 3.3 have been completed and meet the requirements of the policy.
- 3.5 Following receipt of a valid application form and accompanying documents, the following checks by officers are carried out:
- 3.6 **DBS certificate**
- Applicants must provide an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate and proof that they have subscribed to the DBS "Update Service"
 - Officers will advise applicants to apply for a DBS certificate through organisations registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service, such as Worcestershire County Council, or by attending an appointment with an officer from the Licensing team.
- 3.7 **Medical Fitness Certificate**
- Applicants must meet the DVLA's "Group 2 Medical Standards". The Group 2 standards are a strict, high-level health criteria required for

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professional drivers to ensure public safety. Applicants must provide a copy of the Council's prescribed medical fitness certificate, which has been completed by one of the medical practitioners that the Council has approved for this purpose.

- For any licence holder renewing their driver licence for the first time after they reach the age of 45, 50, 55 or 60, they must provide a copy of a new medical certificate which has been completed and signed by one of the Council's approved medical practitioners. From the age of 65 years, the licence holder must produce an annual medical certificate from a Council's approved medical practitioner. Officers will ask for this every year.

3.8 **Worcestershire Taxi and Private Hire Competency Certificate**

- The application process requires the applicant to obtain the Worcestershire Taxi and Private Hire Competency Certificate from the Council's approved training provider.
- With regard to renewal applications licence holders must undertake safeguarding training delivered by the Council's approved training provider prior to submitting their renewal application.
- The Licensing team receive a list of trainees that have attended the courses and those that have not attended after each training session and these details are added into the bank office system.

3.9 **Knowledge Test** – For Dual Licence Applications Only

Applicants wishing to be granted a licence to drive hackney carriage vehicles must have passed the Council's topographical knowledge test. The test is a series of 12 questions relating to various landmarks around the borough and the best directions the driver should take. Applicants must answer at least 10 of the 12 questions correctly in order to pass the test.

3.10 **Additional Checks**

3.11 As part of the processing of the application, additional checks are carried out by the Licensing team in relation to information declared within the application form. These checks are additional checks that are carried out by the licensing team every **6 months** for every licensed driver.

3.12 **National Register of Revocations and Refusals (NR3 register)**

- Applicants and licence holders will be required to disclose if they hold or have previously held a licence with another authority. The applicant is also required to disclose if they have had an application for a licence

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refused, or a licence revoked or suspended by any other Licensing Authority.

- The NR3 register allows the licensing team to record details of where a licence to drive hackney carriage and/or private hire vehicles has been refused or revoked and allows local authorities to check new applicants against the register. The check against the NR3 register will confirm if an applicant has been revoked, refused or suspended elsewhere.

3.13 **HMRC Tax Check**

Within the application form, new applicants must sign a declaration to state they understand that they are aware that HMRC requires them to register for tax.

For renewal applications, the licence holder must confirm they are registered for tax by providing a share code which enables the Licensing Authority to access HMRC's tax records to confirm the applicant is registered for tax.

3.14 **DBS certificate and the Disclosure and Barring Update Service**

- The licensing policy requires all applicants/licence holders to subscribe and remain subscribed to the DBS Update Service and consent to the Council carrying out update checks on the status of their DBS certificate throughout the period of their licence.
- Should an applicant have their DBS certificate application form completed and submitted to the Disclosure and Barring Service by the Licensing team, the applicant will also be verbally advised of the need to register with the update service.
- Once the Disclosure and Barring Service has issued a DBS certificate, the holder of the certificate has 30 days from the date of issue in which to register with the update service.
- On grant of a licence the applicant is provided with the written licence document containing all driver licence conditions including the following–

'DBS Update Service

A licence holder must retain a valid subscription to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Update Service at all times whilst they remain licensed to drive hackney carriage and/or private hire vehicles.'

- In line with the government's statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards, the Licensing team are carrying out 6 monthly status checks on all licensed drivers. The check is done online via the Disclosure and

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Barring Service's status check facility. Certain personal information must be entered into the system, including the original DBS certificate number, in order to access the licence holder's DBS record.

- If the check reveals there is new information held against the licence holder the information will be considered in line with the fit and proper test and the licence will be reviewed by a licensing officer. In most instances any new information on the record is likely to be referred to the Licensing Sub-Committee for consideration.
- If on carrying out the 6 monthly check the Licensing team find that the driver has fallen off the DBS Update Service, the Licensing team will contact the licence holder to ensure the matter is rectified. Where the licence holder has fallen off the Update Service, a new DBS certificate must be applied for.
- If the Licensing team find that the driver has fallen off the update service and they are either unable to make contact with the licence holder or the licence holder refuses or delays to re-subscribe to the update service, the matter will be brought before the Licensing Sub-Committee for consideration.

3.15 This process is much more robust and thorough compared to the pre implementation of the Taxi Standards and although it is to a greater extent more resource intensive it allows new information to be brought to the attention of the licensing team quickly either through the DBS update service check at six months or through the NR3 check at any point any new information about a licence holder comes to light.

3.16 Currently there are a total number of 415 licensed vehicles on the taxi fleet, which consist of 182 hackney carriage vehicles and 233 private hire vehicles. Each six month check can take anything between 10-20 minutes per driver and high number of chase up emails if licence holders are not continuing to remain on the update service.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Licensing fees and charges are set by the Council and are reviewed annually. The introduction of the Taxi Standards in 2022 and checks required have increased the hours required by officers to carry out the necessary checks required.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The licensing process relating to driver licences is carried out in accordance with the following –

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- The Town Police Clauses Act 1847
- The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- The Licensing Authority's Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Policy
- Immigration Act 2016
- HMRC Tax Conditionality Rules 2022
- Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022
- The statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards

6. OTHER – IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

6.1 None identified.

Climate Change Implications

6.2 None identified.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.3 Any recommendation to change policy will require an initial Equality impact assessment.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Any recommendations to consider a new process will need to be put onto the workplan and considered in more detail.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Appendix 1 – Taxi Policy](#)

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Not applicable	Not applicable
Lead Director / Head of Service	Please record the name of the relevant lead Director / Head of	Please give the date they

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	Service who has signed off the report here.	signed off the report here.
Financial Services	Not applicable	Not applicable
Legal Services	Please record the name of the relevant Officer in Legal Services who has signed off the report here.	Please give the date they signed off the report here.
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Not applicable	Not applicable
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Not applicable	Not applicable