

This report is public	
New Cherwell District Council Taxi Licensing Policy	
Committee	General Licensing Committee
Date of Committee	22 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Robert Parkinson
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	13 October 2025
Report of	Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager, Jan Southgate

Purpose of report

To consider the post consultation draft Taxi Licensing Policy for hackney carriage and private hire for adoption by the Council. The draft policy is included at Appendix 1. A summary of changes from the current policy and the post-consultation changes are included at Appendix 3.

1. Recommendations

The General Licensing Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the post consultation Cherwell District Council Taxi Licensing for adoption by Cherwell District Council.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) recommends all licensing authorities have a cohesive policy document that brings together all their procedures on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing. This must include, but not be limited to policies on convictions, a 'fit and proper' person test, license conditions and vehicle standards.
- 2.2 The Council's primary aim in carrying out its Taxi and Private Hire licensing function is to protect and promote public safety. The Council must ensure that licensed vehicles are fit for purpose and that licensed drivers are 'fit and proper' in accordance with the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- 2.3 The legislation above provides a broad framework for the licensing of drivers, vehicles and operators, but the detail of how this is done, including standards and conditions, is the responsibility of licensing authorities. Other Acts must also be considered where they apply; for example, the Equalities Act 2010, which places a duty on councils to take steps to meet the needs of disabled people where these

are different from the needs of other people and enables regulations to improve disabled access to taxis.

- 2.4 The new draft policy introduced changes which we designed to bring the Council's policy more in-line with the current DfT guidance, improve safety, inclusion, compliance and enhance incentives for cleaner vehicles. Consultation on this policy was approved by the General Licensing Committee on the 15 April 2025.
- 2.5 The Council consulted on the new policy from 16 June 2025 to 11 August 2025. During the consultation period two in-person drop-in events were held in the Council Chamber at Castle Quay. The online consultation survey was completed by 32 people, and the in-person events were attended by 36 people on the 15 July and 11 people on the 17 July. E-mails regarding the new policy were also received by the licensing authority from some individuals. These covered policy areas that have been answered in those comments received during the survey, so no separate answers to these have been provided in appendix 4. Following the consultation all the feedback received was considered and several changes were made to the draft policy; these are outlined in appendix 3 and section 4 of this report.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	<p>If adopted the policy will mean additional income for the Council by means of Taxi inspections at the Council's depot but cost neutral for the driver.</p> <p>Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 7 October 2025</p>
Legal	<p>Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) legislation is primarily concentrated in the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (the 1847 Act) and • Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (the 1976 Act). <p>The Council should also consider its requirements within other Acts such as the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022, which amends the Equality Act 2010 along with important statutory guidance, for example the Department for Transport best practice guideline.</p> <p>Any new or amended policy must be reasonable, proportionate, and not go beyond the powers granted to the council by law. Policies can be challenged in court if they are deemed to be unreasonable or for an ulterior motive.</p> <p>The report identifies that we are amending our current licensing policy to ensure the Department for Transport's best practice guideline is considered and included. Moreover, the report highlights our current gaps and ensures we comply with Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 when considering the use of taxi's by disabled people.</p> <p>Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 10 October 2025</p>
Risk Management	<p>There are no risk implications directly linked to this policy. The updated policy mitigates the risk of not being compliant with the DfT best practice guidance.</p>

	Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 09 October 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	X			The proposed policy will have a positive impact on service users with requirements for Wheelchair accessible vehicles. And increased incentives for adoption of these types of vehicles by licenced drivers. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 9 October 2025
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			New policy in line with DfT guidance to promote wheelchair accessibility, an inclusive service plan has been included. This contains fleet limits for Private hire operators to have wheelchair accessible vehicles. Additionally, the age limit for wheelchair accessible vehicles has been increased to promote the licensing of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
Climate & Environmental Impact	X			The Council has a target of net zero by 2030; the new policy promotes cleaner vehicles by removing the age limit on full electric and hydrogen powered vehicles. Additionally, the age limit for hybrid vehicles is being increased.
ICT & Digital Impact		X		N/A
Data Impact		X		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		X		N/A
Council Priorities	Environmental Stewardship, Quality Housing and Place Making			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property, 3 March 2025			
Consultation & Engagement	An 8-week public and trade consultation was held from the 16 June 2025 to 11 August 2025. The consultation also included two drop-in events on the 15 and 17 of July in the Council Chamber. Consultation responses can be found in Appendix 4.			
Supporting Information				

3. Background

- 3.1 In November 2023, the DfT revised the Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England. The DfT has issued guidance on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing since 2006 to assist local authorities that have responsibility for the regulation of the taxi and private hire vehicle trades. This is updated periodically, considering stakeholder views and changes in the way the sector operates. This best practice guidance is one of several documents intended to assist the operation and regulation of the sector.
- 3.2 The DfT last published non-statutory best practice guidance to complement the Statutory Standards in 2010 and have revised and re-issued this in November 2023, covering a range of issues outside the remit of the Statutory Standards. The changes to the Taxi Licensing Policy introduce additional requirements to bring the Council's policy in line with the latest DfT best practice guidance and also provides additional incentives for the adoption of cleaner vehicles. Appendix 3 details Taxi Licensing Policy Change Summary for reference. The change summary includes changes made to the policy post-consultation.

4. Details

- 4.1 The consultation responses have been considered and the following changes to the draft policy have been made.
- 4.2 Inclusive service plan (ISP): introduced in the latest DfT guidance licensing authorities should produce and maintain an ISP as part of their taxi licensing policy. The aim of the ISP is to promote more accessible vehicles and reduce barriers for disabled users. The draft policy contained a requirement for Licensed Operators with 10 or more licensed vehicles facilitating hire and reward journeys under their operator's license, to aim to have at least 20% of the private hire vehicles operating under their license registered as wheelchair accessible before 01/01/2028. The feedback received regarding this outlined that the required percentage of 20% was too high, given the demand experienced by operators for these types of vehicles. Concerns were also raised regarding the availability and cost of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV).
- 4.3 The Licensing Authority is committed, within its ISP, to requiring Operators to be required to have WAV available for those service users who require them. Having considered the feedback, we have changed the draft policy to require Operators, who have more than 20 vehicles, to have one WAV for every 20 vehicles, the WAV can include a Hackney Carriage WAV. The age limit for WAV has been increased from 10 years to 15 years for internal combustion engine vehicles (ICE). The incentive to adopt cleaner vehicles remains with hybrid WAV vehicles increasing from 15 years to 20 years and electric and hydrogen powered vehicles age limits being unlimited.
- 4.4 The draft policy introduced daily documented vehicle checks for driver and operators. We received concerns from drivers and operators that the requirement to fully document all checks was overburdensome. The Council are of the opinion that the checks are required to be documented. However, these can be completed

and documented as being completed by exception. So noted as the check being completed and only any identified issues and corrective actions documented. For Operators the checks must be available to them on request, Operators will not be required to obtain the daily checks from drivers each day.

- 4.5 Consultation responses were received regarding the Introduction of Council led vehicle inspections. To be delivered by a 6-month vehicle inspection at the Cherwell District Council depot during each 12-month vehicle licence period, this will replace the current requirement for an additional MOT 6-months into each 12-month licence period. There were concerns raised by drivers about the capacity of the depot and the booking of the checks. The Licensing Authority are still committed to have council led inspections at the Council's depot. We believe these will ensure consistency and enable the inspections to include taxi licensing specific checks, which the current MOT requirement is unable to incorporate. This will be cost neutral to license holders, as the council led checks will be at no more cost than the MOT cost and the frequency of the checks will be maintained to the current 6-month MOT check for licenced taxi vehicles. We have amended the implementation date for these checks from the 1 January 2026 to 1 April 2026. Allowing for testing capacity and functionality assessments prior to implementation.
- 4.6 During the consultation comments were received, in the survey and during the drop-in events, regarding the age limits of vehicles in the Council's policy. We have considered these comments and note the latest DfT best practice recommends age limits for vehicles are removed. The Licensing Authority consider that the removing of age limits would remove incentives for drivers to move to cleaner or zero emission vehicles. However, we recognise the cost of replacing vehicles to drivers. Therefore, we have amended the age limits for vehicles as set out below:
- Remove 6-year maximum licence grant age limits, and increase of vehicle age limits from 10-year-old vehicles to:
 - Petrol/Diesel, Hybrid non wheelchairs vehicles maximum licensing period to 12 years old vehicles.
 - Petrol/Diesel Wheelchair accessible vehicles to 15 years old
 - Wheelchair accessible hybrid vehicles 20 years
 - Zero emissions vehicles no licensing age limits.
- 4.7 All ICE vehicles from September 2014 are Euro 6 standard. By increasing the age limits as outlined above, we still ensure all licensed vehicles are of the latest ICE emission standard. This also retains the important incentive for drivers to adopt cleaner vehicles.
- 4.8 It was highlighted by drivers during the consultation that topography questions in the Council's Knowledge test were now outdated, due to the use and widespread availability of Satellite Navigation Systems. The Licensing Authority agreed that these systems now make Topography questions in the Knowledge test less relevant. Therefore, we will remove Topography questions from the Knowledge test and replaced with Taxi Licensing policy and legislation questions.

- 4.9 Changed the requirement for number of years of driving experience for drivers from 3 years to 12 consecutive months. This was highlighted by current drivers and seen as a barrier to potential new drivers, who should be assessed on application for suitability as a licenced driver.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.
- 5.2 Option 1: Leave the current policy in place. This would mean ignoring the latest DfT guidance, this guidance introduces the inclusive service plan for disabled access. Changing the policy also introduces additional safety measures, like driver vehicle safety checks, council directed vehicle inspections and 3 monthly DBS checks for drivers. The draft policy also has enhanced incentives for drivers to move to cleaner vehicles which supports the Council's priority of "Environmental Stewardship" and the current target of net zero by 2030.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Council must have regard to the Department for Transport's Best Practice Guidance. The changes proposed bring the Council's Taxi Policy more in line with the most recent published guidance. All the changes have benefits in one or more of the following areas: improved safety, consistency, compliance, inclusion and improved incentives for the adoption of cleaner vehicles. The post consultation changes also introduce increased age limits for vehicles.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Taxi Licensing Policy 2025 v4.1
Appendix 2	Taxi and Private Hire Policy Appendices 2025 V4.1 A-I
Appendix 3	Taxi Licensing Policy Post Consultation Change Summary
Appendix 4	Consultation Survey Responses

Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	DfT Guidance for Local Authorities, DfT Driver vehicle condition checklist, DVLA medical requirements.
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Corporate Director Approval	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities 10 October 2025