

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING
COMMITTEE

AGENDA
ITEM NO

8

8 DECEMBER 2016

Report Title	Taxi and Private Hire Policy Review 2016
Purpose of Report	To enable Committee to consider adopting proposed amendments to Stroud District Council's Taxi and Private Hire Policy and Conditions.
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES: 1. To approve the recommendations in paragraph 4.3 of this report 2. From 1 April 2017, to adopt the Taxi and Private Hire Information, Policy and Conditions booklet (Appendix C of this report) as amended in accordance with this report.
Consultation and Feedback	All licensed taxi and private hire licence holders were sent a newsletter with details of the proposed amendments. Further, there was a formal consultation period between 22 August 2016 and 31 October 2016.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no Financial implications directly arising from this report. Adele Rudkin – Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	No significant legal implications to report. Karen Trickey, Legal Services Manager
Report Author	Rachel Andrew Principal Licensing Officer Tel: 01453 754401 licensing @stroud.gov.uk
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A – Proposed Amendments Appendix B – Schedule of Consultation Responses and Recommendations Appendix C –Draft Revised Information Policy and Conditions Booklet

1 Background

1.1 Stroud District Council's 'Taxi and Private Hire Information, Policy and Conditions' is a booklet that contains Stroud District Council's policies on matters such as application requirements, vehicle conditions, relevance of convictions and dealing with enforcement and complaints. The current booklet was adopted in 2011.

2 Review of Policies and Conditions

2.1 The Licensing Section has reviewed the booklet and put forward a number of amendments to ensure that it is up to date with current national guidance and best practice. The aim is to protect the public by

ensuring that Stroud District taxi and private hire drivers, vehicles and operators are suitable and safe.

- 2.2 The proposed amendments put forward by the Licensing Section with the details and reasons are listed in Appendix A.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 The proposed amendments were put out for formal consultation between 22 August 2016 and 31 October 2016.

- 3.2 The details of the consultation have been available on Stroud District Council's website as well as a notice in Reception at Ebley Mill.

- 3.3 Links to the consultation webpage were circulated widely including to all Members, Town and Parish Councils, Police, Highways, Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Chambers of Trade.

- 3.4 A newsletter was sent to all taxi and private hire licence holders in August 2016 which explained about the review and included the proposed list of amendments and a comments form for making a response.

- 3.5 The Licensing Section received 44 responses to the consultation. Of those 33 were from the taxi and private hire trade (the consultation was sent to 215 taxi and private hire licence holders). Generally those that were not from the trade were in support of all the proposals. The taxi and private hire trade had mixed responses but a large proportion was mainly in support of most of the proposals.

- 3.6 The proposal that had the most comment was the introduction of an age policy for vehicles. The comments from the trade that responded on this topic were mixed with about 24% totally in favour and 21% totally against. 54% partially supported the proposal but added comments mainly about what age limits should be used for renewals and either for or against the proposed exemptions for elite and wheelchair accessible vehicles.

- 3.7 The other proposal that received varied comment was about CCTV cameras in vehicles. The proposal was that, in accordance with the information Commissioners Office, audio recordings should not be permitted. However a number of taxi drivers said they had experienced verbal and racial abuse from customers and so felt audio recordings should be permitted.

- 3.8 Appendix B shows a schedule of all consultation responses.

4 Recommendations Following Consultation

- 4.1 A Working Group made up of the Chair, Vice Chair and one other Member of Community Services and Licensing Committee met with Licensing Officers to consider the consultation responses and to make recommendations for Committee to consider.

- 4.2 Appendix B shows the recommendations of the Working Group and reasons.

4.3 The recommendations are as shown below:

	Summary of Proposal	Recommendation
1	Medicals To be completed by own GP or medical practice that has access to medical records. Current policy is any medical practitioner.	Adopt.
2	Driver Assessment Test New applicants to take the DVSA driving test. Current policy is County Council test NB – DVSA have since announced they will cease doing taxi tests. However other similar providers have come forward.	Amend proposal so that test is taken by a provider approved by Licensing Officers.
3	Knowledge Test Remove driven part of test. Currently test is two parts, multiple choice and a driven test with Officers	Adopt and add that the multiple choice part of the test is expanded.
4	Vehicle Age Policy New applications - vehicles must be no more than 5 years old Renewal applications - vehicles must be no more than 10 years old. Exemption for wheelchair accessible vehicles and elite vehicles in excellent condition. Currently there is no age limit.	Adopt.
5	CCTV Vehicles with CCTV must display a sign and not record audio conversations.	Amend proposal in line with London Taxi conditions that allow CCTV to make audio recording through a panic button if there is threat to an individual's safety.
6	Safeguarding Training. Must be taken by all new applicants within 12 months and within 2 years for existing drivers. NB Gloucestershire Safeguarding are going to be running a programme of training during 2017. There will be no cost to drivers. It is not known yet if the training will be provided after 2017.	Amend proposal so that training must be taken provided it is available and for existing drivers it must be taken within 1 year.
7	Tinted Windows Tinted film added onto windows after manufacture will not be permitted.	Adopt.
8	Criminal Convictions Policy Various amendments to current policy to make it more robust.	Adopt.

9	Enforcement and Complaints Policy New policy outlining process for dealing with complaints and breaches and provision for review of an existing licence by a panel made up of 3 members of the relevant committee.	Adopt.
10	Intended Use Policy Taxi licence holders to give commitment they will mainly operate from Stroud District rather than operating entirely outside of the district.	Adopt.
11	Other Comments Ban E cigarettes. Standard roof signs for taxis. Have a front plate on vehicles in addition to current back plate. Standard colour for taxis. Restrict number of taxi licences issued. Lack of wheelchair accessible taxis.	These are all matters that would need detailed consideration. If appropriate they could be put forward for a future review.

4.4 It is recommended that the adopted amendments come into force on 1 April 2017.

4.5 Appendix C is the draft revised 'Stroud District Council Information Policy and Conditions' Booklet which reflects the recommended amendments in this report and also has been updated to take account of any changes in legislation and other minor amendments since it was last adopted.

5 Conclusion

5.1 A number of proposed amendments to Stroud District's taxi and private hire policies and conditions have been consulted on and a range of comments received.

5.2 If Committee are satisfied with the recommendations put forward in this report they should adopt the draft revised 'Taxi and Private Hire Information, Policy and Conditions' booklet to come into effect from 1 April 2017