

Huntingdonshire District  
Council

Hackney Carriage and Private  
Hire

Draft Licensing Policy



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## Definitions

The Council	Means Huntingdonshire District Council
The Licensing Authority	Means the licensing function within Huntingdonshire District Council
The Controlled District	Boundary area of a local authority which has adopted the provisions of the 1976 Act
Licensing and Protection	Is the committee which determine licensing matters as set out in the Council's constitution
Authorised Council Officer	A council officer who is authorised by the council to exercise powers and duties conferred by legislation
This Policy	Is this policy document and appendices
Applicant	Is a person or business who has submitted an application for either a grant or renewal of a licence
Licensed Vehicle	Is a vehicle which is licensed under the 1847 Act as a hackney carriage or licensed under the 1976 Act as a private hire vehicle
Proprietor	Is the registered owner or part owner of a vehicle
Taximeter	Is the device used for calculating the fare to be charged for the journey by measuring distance travelled plus any time waiting. Fitted in all hackney carriage vehicles and some private hire vehicles
Fare Card	Is a card which must be displayed in vehicles that are fitted with a taximeter which indicates the maximum authorised fare to be charged for distance travelled, waiting time and soilage charge.
The Licence Plate	The plate which licensed vehicles must display which shows the licence number, the maximum amount of persons to be carried, expiry date, vehicle registration number, and make and colour of vehicle
Date of First Registration	Means the date shown as the date of first registration on the vehicle's V5 logbook issued by DVLA
Driving licence	A full UK driving licence issued by DVLA or acceptable equivalent as defined by DVLA
Licensed Driver	A driver licensed under the 1847 Act to drive a hackney carriage vehicle or under the 1976 Act to drive a private hire vehicle.
Badge	Issued to all licensed drivers and must be worn when working as a licensed driver
Operator	The business which invites and accepts bookings for private hire work
Private Hire Vehicle	A vehicle licensed under the 1976 Act
Door Stickers	Door stickers which must be permanently affixed to doors of vehicles, displaying the Huntingdonshire District Council logo and suitable wording to differentiate between private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	A vehicle licensed under the 1847 Act commonly referred to as a taxi
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DVLA	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
DfT	Department for Transport
DVSA	Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (which replaced VOSA in 2014)
The Equality Act	Means the Equality Act 2010
Assistance Dog	Is a dog which is trained to assist people with disabilities to help them with their day to day life
Conditions	Mean the conditions of licence applied by the Council to either a driver's licence, an operator's licence or a vehicle licence.
The 1847 Act	The Town and Police Clauses Act 1847 and the provisions within
The 1976 Act	The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the provisions within
Road Traffic Acts	Including all associated legislation
PSV	Public Service Vehicle
WAV	Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle
Byelaws	Locally adopted 'conditions' applicable to hackney carriage drivers
CoC	Certificate of Compliance

## Section 1 - Introduction

### Policy Purpose, Status and Scope

- 1.1 This document sets out Huntingdonshire District Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy on the licensing of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers, Vehicles and Private Hire Operators. The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance and information on the general approach taken by Huntingdonshire District Council when administering its functions within the legislative framework of the 1847 and 1976 Acts.
- 1.2 This policy also sets out the legislative framework administered by the Licensing Authority in respect of such licences, however it is not a comprehensive statement of the law. This policy does not override the legal requirements embodied in any legislation in force at the time of adoption or as may be enacted after the adoption of the policy. Where any subsequent changes occur to applicable legislation, or its interpretation by the courts that conflict with this policy, the conflicting elements shall not apply and will be amended at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3 The legislation places a duty on the Council as the Licensing Authority for licensing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles, drivers and operators. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles play a vital and integral in an integrated public system and the importance of a thriving Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade to the growth and prosperity of Huntingdonshire District's local economy is recognised.
- 1.4 The Licensing Authority understands the importance and responsibility it has in ensuring that licensed vehicles in the district are safe, comfortable, properly insured and available where and when required, and that drivers and operators are "fit and proper" (i.e. safe and suitable) to undertake the role. However the safety and welfare of the public is the overriding principle that will be considered when matters are dealt with under the policy.
- 1.5 This policy is intended to put the Council's licensing requirements into context for all parties in a clear and transparent manner.

### Aims

- 1.6 The Department for Transport best practice guide states the aim of the Licensing Authority is to protect the public. In setting out this policy, the Licensing Authority seeks to carry out its licensing functions with a view to promoting the following aims:
  - The safety and protection of the public; to include driver conduct and performance, consideration of their history of convictions and cautions, knowledge of the area, health and fitness to fulfil the role of a licensed driver and vehicle specifications.
  - Vehicle safety, comfort and access; to include standard of vehicle comfort and appearance and accessibility of facilities.
  - The prevention of crime and disorder: including working with the Police and other relevant agencies, operation of a planned and unplanned compliance and enforcement programme, driver, vehicle and operating conditions, fit and proper processes and support with local businesses.
  - The protection of children and vulnerable persons at risk from harm; including safeguarding requirements and training, co-operation with other agencies, robust reporting and determination of fit and proper persons.

In addition it will provide a service that is value for money.

- 1.7 This policy recognises that the licensing function is only one means of securing the delivery of the above aims. The Licensing Authority will therefore continue to work in partnership with the trade, its neighbouring authorities, the police, other enforcement agencies, local businesses and local people toward the promotion of the aims.
- 1.8 Each decision, application or enforcement measure will be considered on its own merits, using the policy as a main guideline. However, where and if considered necessary, the Licensing Authority may depart from the policy, but will provide clear and compelling reasons for doing so.
- 1.9 This policy is not a comprehensive statement of the law, applicants should always obtain their own legal advice if they are unsure of the requirements of legislation.

### **Powers and duties**

- 1.10 This policy has been produced pursuant to the powers conferred by the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended) which places duties on the Council to carry out its licensing function.
- 1.11 In exercising its discretion in carrying out its regulatory functions, the Licensing Authority shall have regard to this policy document and the objectives set out above.
- 1.12 In undertaking its licensing function, the Licensing Authority will also have regard to other relevant legislation including:
- Transport Act 1985 and other associated Road Traffic Acts
  - Road Vehicles (Constructions and use) Regulations 1986
  - Crime and Disorder Act 1998
  - Data Protection Act 1998
  - Human Rights Act 1998
  - Environmental Protection Act 1990
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Health Act 2006 and Smoke-free Regulations 2006/7
  - Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006
  - Road Safety Act 2006
  - Immigration Act 2016
  - Policing and Crime Act 2017
- 1.13 This document sets out the policy that the Licensing Authority will apply when making decisions about new applications and licences currently in force.

### **Consultation and Revision**

- 1.14 This policy and appendices will be kept under review and revised as appropriate, in any event, not less than five years from the date of its last adoption. The Authority will consult, where appropriate, on proposed revisions, to reflect changes in case law and legislation. The Licensing and Protection Committee may make any amendments to the policy and appendices. Sections of the policy may be updated and amended without the whole policy being consulted upon.
- 1.15 Consultation will take place with the following:
- Huntingdonshire Hackney Carriage Representatives
  - Taxi and private hire drivers and proprietors
  - Huntingdonshire private hire operators
  - District and Parish councillors
  - Cambridgeshire County Council Passenger Transport
  - Local Children's Safeguarding
  - Cambridgeshire Constabulary – Chief Constable of Police

Huntingdon Chamber of Commerce  
Neighbouring Licensing authorities  
General public

- 1.16 The consultation will appear on the Council's website advising the nature of the consultation and period.

### **Implementation**

- 1.17 This policy shall take effect from 1 April 2018 and will override and supersede all existing Council policy and guidance in relation to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing. The Authority expects all licence holders to comply with its terms immediately, but it is acknowledged that certain provisions may place financial obligations on existing licence holders and accordingly the Authority is prepared to permit a transitional period, during which time necessary changes must be made.
- 1.18 The published policy will be made available on the Council's website and at the Council's offices at Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN, during office hours.

### **The Licensing Regime**

- 1.19 Some activities are considered to be of such a risk to the safety of members of the public that that law requires an approval to be in place in the form of a licence to regulate that activity. This is the case for the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade, who make themselves available for hire to transport members of the public to their chosen destination in return for reward. The legislation creates three types of licence:
- Drivers (This Authority issues a dual Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's licence)
  - Vehicles (Hackney Carriage and Private Hire)
  - Operators (Private Hire only)
- 1.20 A journey not carried out in accordance with the correct licences is not only illegal, but is likely to invalidate the insurance held by the driver and could have serious consequences for all parties involved should an accident occur.
- 1.21 A Hackney Carriage is a public transport vehicle with no more than 8 passenger seats, which is licensed to ply for hire. This means it can stand at ranks or be hailed in the street by members of the public.
- 1.22 Private Hire Vehicles must have no more than 8 passenger seats and must be booked in advance by customers through an operator and may not ply for hire in the street.
- 1.23 Vehicles that are required to carry more than 8 passengers for hire and reward are classed as Public Service Vehicles (PSV) and the Licensing Authority has no involvement in the licensing of these vehicles.
- 1.24 Any person who carries out hire and reward work without the correct licences, would be breaking the law and therefore would not have valid insurance. This can have serious consequences for all parties involved, if an accident or incident occurs.
- 1.25 In order to be licensed correctly the licenses must 'match', i.e. issued by the same local authority. A Hackney Carriage vehicle and the driver must be licensed by the same local authority. For Private Hire, the operator, driver and vehicle must be licensed by the same authority. This does not prohibit the operator subcontracting a booking to another operator licensed by a different local authority.



- 1.26 The legislation places a duty on the local authority to only licence those who are considered to be 'fit and proper'. The term 'fit and proper' is not defined in legislation but 'safe and suitable' would be considered an acceptable interpretation and its widest interpretation should apply.
- 1.27 The legislation allows local authorities to set their own conditions, requirements and application processes.
- 1.28 The aim of the legislation is to ensure that the public have reasonable access to these services and to ensure the public are protected. Public safety is paramount and has a wide scope, including public safeguarding, protecting vulnerable persons and public wellbeing. To achieve this aim and to meet our obligations, the Council have conditions and processes in place to promote well run, safe and responsible businesses.

### **Information sharing**

- 1.29 In the interests of protecting public funds, the Council reserve the right to use any information or data submitted as part of an application, renewal, administration or compliance and enforcement process for the prevention and detection of fraud and crime.

### **Data Protection Act 1998 – Privacy Notice – Fair Processing**

The Council is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998. This allows it to process personal data in performing its lawful business. Information held by the Council, including personal data provided now or in the future, will be processed in compliance with data protection principles. Personal data may be used to manage, monitor, improve and promote the Council's services. Where delivery of services or actions in partnership with others, or dependent on the actions of others, it may also be shared with other persons or bodies in accordance with, and restricted to the terms of information sharing agreements and protocols. To protect public funds it may also be shared with other persons or bodies to prevent and detect fraud. Further details are available on the Council's website [www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/privacy). For concerns about the processing of personal data by the Council you may contact the Data Protection Officer at Huntingdonshire District Council, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN or the Office of the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

- 1.30 **Trust ID:** The Council has introduced the use of electronic scanners to check and verify identity documents from all customers applying to access Council services. This Authority will scan documents with a product called Trust ID. You can find further information about Trust ID on their website: <https://www.trustid.co.uk/>
- 1.31 **Partnership working:** The Licensing Authority works in partnership with many other enforcement agencies such as the Police, HM Revenue and Customs, the Home Office, DVSA, Department of Work and Pensions, benefit fraud etc. The council will share information with other departments or regulatory bodies where appropriate. The council is legally required to provide information if requested, pursuant to a criminal offence, or to detect fraud, or immigration offences.
- 1.32 **Neighbouring Authorities:** The Licensing Authority will also work with neighbouring authorities and report to them any relevant matters that relate to their licence holders.

### **Decision making**

- 1.33 The Licensing Authority aims to provide a clear, consistent and responsive service to prospective and current licence holders, members of the public and other stakeholders, including the provision of advice and guidance. The Licensing Authority will be mindful of the needs of the applicant and licence holder, but this will be balanced against the over-riding duty that the Licensing Authority has to protect the safety and welfare of the public.

- 1.34 The Council has delegated its taxi licensing functions to the Council's Licensing and Protection Committee which has, in turn, further delegated authority to the Licensing and Protection Sub-Committees and to Officers of the Council who will determine applications and licensing decisions in accordance with this Policy.
- 1.35 Whilst officers and the relevant committees will in the majority of cases follow the Policy, there may be specific circumstances that require a departure from the Policy. In such circumstances, the reasons for departing from the Policy will be made clear.
- 1.36 The Licensing Authority has the power to refuse to grant or renew licences and also to suspend or revoke existing licences in accordance with relevant legislative provisions. Where the legislative provisions allow, parties aggrieved by a decision have a right of appeal to Peterborough Magistrates' Court which must be logged within the relevant statutory provisions.

#### **Immigration Act 2016 – implications for all licences**

- 1.37 The Council has a statutory obligation to ensure that applicants have the legal right to work in the UK prior to issuing a licence. The issuing or refusing of licenses will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Immigration Act 2016 with due regard to Home Office guidance.
- 1.38 The Council takes this responsibility seriously and has checks in place to ensure compliance with the Act, and will liaise where required with relevant Home Office departments. If however, a licence has been issued incorrectly for whatever reason, the licence ceases to have effect if the person does not have the right to work in the UK. Any licence which has expired due to the person's immigration status must be returned to the council within 7 calendar days.
- 1.39 A licence may be suspended or revoked or refused to be renewed if, since the grant of the licence there has been a conviction of an immigration offence or a requirement to pay an immigration penalty.
- 1.40 Proprietors and operators also have an obligation to ensure that they only utilise persons who have the right to work in the UK. Failure to observe this obligation, or to provide due diligence checks, will be subject to enforcement action by the appropriate Home Office department, which may result in a civil penalty or imprisonment.

#### **Policing and Crime Act 2017**

- 1.41 The Council will give full regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State regarding the protection of children, and vulnerable individuals who are 18 or over, from harm.

## **Section 2 - Applications for Licences**

### **Application procedures**

- 2.1 Applicants must fully complete the specified application forms and provide the relevant accompanying paperwork required and fee. Where supporting documentation is required to be submitted, only the original document will be accepted, not photocopies or photographs of the original. Applicants who deliberately fail to declare or who make false statements on the application form or during the application process, may be subject to legal action if it constitutes fraud.
- 2.2 The Licensing Authority shall consider all applications on their own merits once the appropriate criteria have been met, the fee paid and the application form and supporting documents are complete.
- 2.3 The responsibility for applying for a licence rests solely with the applicant. This includes that all documentation, checks and associated criteria is up to date. All application forms, appropriate fees and supporting documentation shall be produced and any necessary appointments attended on a date prior to the expiry date of the licence. The licence fees payable are subject to review and any increase or reduction will be published as required by legislation.
- 2.4 This Authority will only accept complete applications comprising all the necessary information and documentation.

### **Grant**

- 2.5 Only when the Licensing Authority is satisfied that the application is complete and can be determined in accordance with the Council's policy and procedures will a licence be determined.
- 2.6 The maximum period for which a vehicle licence will be granted is one year. The Licensing Authority may exercise discretion and issue a licence of a shorter duration if it considers this to be reasonable given the individual circumstances. Accident replacement vehicles will only be licensed for a temporary period up to three months.
- 2.7 The maximum period for which a dual driver's licence will be granted is the year. The Licensing Authority may exercise discretion and issue a licence of a shorter duration if it considers this to be reasonable given the individual circumstances.
- 2.8 The maximum period for which a Private Hire Operators licence will be granted is five year. The Licensing Authority may exercise discretion and issue a licence of a shorter duration if it considers this to be reasonable given the individual circumstances.
- 2.9 The responsibility for applying to renew a licence and to ensure that a vehicle is licensed rests solely with the licence holder. Application forms, appropriate fees and supporting documentation shall be produced and appointments arranged on a date prior to the expiry of the licence. Licence fees are subject to review and any increase or reduction will be published as required by legislation.

### **Renewals**

- 2.10 The responsibility for applying or renewing a licence rests solely with the applicant/ licence holder. This includes that all documentation, checks and associated criteria is up to date. All application forms, appropriate fees and supporting documentation shall be produced and any necessary appointments attended on a date prior to the expiry date of the licence. The licence fees payable are subject to review and any increase or reduction will be published as required by legislation.

- 2.11 Late or incomplete applications for renewals may render the driver, vehicle or operator as being unlicensed for a period of time during which licensed activities must not be undertaken. In some cases, once a licence has lapsed, it may not be eligible to be renewed, and a new application will be required.
- 2.12 This Authority will only accept complete applications comprising all the necessary information and documentation. Late or incomplete applications may render a driver being unlicensed, during which time they will be unable to work as a licensed driver.

## **Section 3 - Vehicles**

### **General provisions for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles**

#### **Limitation of vehicle numbers**

- 3.1 The legal provision on quantity restrictions for Hackney Carriages is set out in the Transport Act 1985, Section 16. Any limit imposed needs to comply with Part 12 of the Equality Act 2010 and any associated regulations in respect of the proportion of the taxi fleet accessible to disabled persons.
- 3.2 Huntingdonshire District Council has not set a limit for the number of hackney carriage vehicles it will licence. This ensures that Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles are readily available for passengers in Huntingdonshire district. There are no powers for licensing authorities to limit the number of private hire vehicles.

#### **Definitions, Specifications and Conditions**

- 3.3 The main difference between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles is that a Hackney Carriage can be hailed in a public street or hired from a taxi rank. Private Hire vehicles must be pre-booked in advance through a licensed Private Hire Operator and are not permitted to wait on a rank or be booked directly from a public street. Should a private hire vehicle driver accept a fare which has not been pre-booked through an operator he is committing an offence. Anyone being conveyed in a Private Hire vehicle which has not been pre-booked will not be covered by the drivers insurance.
- 3.4 Local Licensing Authorities have a wide range of discretion over the types of vehicle they licence as Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles. Government guidance recommends that Licensing Authorities adopt a principle of specifying as many different types of vehicle as possible, leaving it open to the trade to put forward vehicles of their own choice that can be shown to meet criteria.
- 3.5 The Licensing Authority will only licence a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle of it complies with European Whole Vehicle (M1) type approval, M1 Low Volume Type Approval or UK National Small Series Type Approval and Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA). These approvals relate to WAV's / converted vehicles and not saloon vehicles.
- 3.6 A vehicle will only be licensed as a Private Hire Vehicle if it is not of an appearance or design that is considered likely to lead the public to think it is a licensed Hackney Carriage Vehicle.
- 3.7 The Licensing Authority is empowered to impose such conditions as it considers reasonably necessary in relation to the grant or renewal of a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire vehicle licence. These vehicles provide a service to the public, so it is appropriate to set criteria for the external and internal conditions of vehicles, provided that they are not unreasonably onerous.
- 3.8 All vehicles presented to the Licensing Authority for licensing and all vehicles whilst licensed must comply with the Authority's current policy and vehicle testing standards specification.
- 3.9 The Licensing Authority reserves the right to carry out or require any form of test, examination or assessment as it sees fit to determine the suitability of a vehicle for licensing or to remain a licensed vehicle.
- 3.10 Licensed vehicles can only be driven by licensed drivers (except when the vehicle is being tested by a garage mechanic).

## **Smoking**

- 3.11 All licensed vehicles must comply with the requirements of the Health Act 2006 and display a no smoking sign in the vehicle in which people can be carried. It is an offence to smoke or permit a person to smoke in a licensed vehicle at any time, even when being used by the driver for social, domestic and pleasure purposes.

## **Signage, Livery and Advertising**

- 3.12 It is essential that the public should be able to identify and understand the difference between a Hackney Carriage and a Private Hire Vehicle.
- 3.13 Both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles will be required to display licence plates on their vehicle. This is a key feature in helping to identify vehicles that are properly licensed:
- 3.14 Hackney Carriage Vehicles will have signage on the rear passenger doors of the vehicle bearing the Huntingdonshire District Council logo and the words 'Licensed Hackney Carriage'. They also display a blue identification plate on the rear of the vehicle and a blue windscreen notice bearing the licence plate number. They will have a roof sign on the top of the vehicle.
- 3.15 Private Hire Vehicles will have signage on the rear passenger doors of the vehicle bearing the Huntingdonshire District Council logo and the words 'Private hire vehicle – insurance invalid unless pre-booked with operator'. They also display a yellow identification plate on the rear of the vehicle and a yellow windscreen notice bearing the licence plate number. They will not have a roof sign or any signs that include the words 'taxi', 'cab', 'taxicab' or 'for hire'.
- 3.16 Such signage will be permanently affixed (not magnetic) door signage. The external licence plate will be securely fixed to the outside of the vehicle, no temporary fixing is allowed. The signage and plates will be provided by the Licensing Authority for a fee.
- 3.17 Roof signs fitted to Hackney Carriage vehicles shall be illuminated at all times when the vehicle is available for hire. The sign will show the word "TAXI" on the front and the company's telephone number on the rear.
- 3.18 Further details of signs, notices and advertising on vehicles can be found within in the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licence conditions, available on request from the Licensing Team or on the Council website.

## **Age policy**

- 3.19 A section will be inserted here upon the outcome of the consultation on the introduction of an age policy.

## **Insurance**

- 3.20 It is the responsibility of proprietors, operators and drivers to ensure that they are properly insured at all times. Insurance provided by operators to cover their fleet and drivers is usually only valid when drivers are driving for that company. If drivers work for multiple operators, all parties must ensure that appropriate and valid insurance is in place to avoid an inadvertent criminal offence.

- 3.21 Applications for new or renewal of a vehicle licence will require submission of proof of valid insurance which covers the vehicle and driver for hire and reward purposes. The vehicle proprietor and the driver must ensure that valid insurance is maintained at all times. It is considered best practice for proprietors and or drivers to keep copies of expired insurance policies for a reasonable period of time in case of any retrospective claims.

### **Safety equipment**

- 3.22 All licensed vehicles must have a suitable and efficient fire extinguisher and first aid kit containing appropriate first aid dressings and appliances. Such equipment must be in date and carried in such a position in the vehicle as to be readily available and visible for immediate use in an emergency.

### **CCTV in licensed vehicles**

- 3.23 The Licensing Authority recognises the importance of driver and passenger safety and encourages ways to reduce risks such as prepayment of fares, driver screens, radio link schemes and CCTV surveillance systems.
- 3.24 The Licensing Authority does not require enhanced security or CCTV measures to be in vehicles at this time. However the Authority wishes to support the trade in taking sensible measures to protect the drivers and passengers in licensed vehicles and does recognise that there are benefits to the trade and public where CCTV is installed in licensed vehicles. It is therefore left to the judgement of the proprietors, drivers and operators to determine the taking of such measures.
- 3.25 Where drivers, proprietors and operators have considered it appropriate to install CCTV in their vehicles as a safeguarding measure, they must notify the council prior to installation. They must be registered with the ICO and comply with all aspects of data protection and CCTV codes of practice. Further information can be found on the following link.<https://ico.org.uk/>
- 3.26 CCTV must be professionally installed to ensure no interference with other equipment, in such a manner that it does not increase the risk of injury or discomfort to the driver and passengers, or affect any other safety system or in any way breach the motor vehicle construction and use regulations. It must be regularly checked and maintained, be openly overt and the vehicle must display the required signage.
- 3.27 CCTV must not be used to record conversations of the travelling public as it is highly intrusive. Some systems have a driver panic button which if activated does record sound, this should only be used in extreme circumstances, such as in response to a threat of physical violence.
- 3.28 The Licensing Authority reserves the right to amend CCTV specification from time to time as the need arises, having regard to changes in technical standards, case law, national policy or any other circumstances that make it reasonable to amend the current specification.

### **Maintenance of vehicles**

- 3.29 Licensed vehicles have high usage and mileage and it is in the public interest, as well as the drivers, to ensure that vehicles are properly maintained.
- 3.30 The Council expects commitment from drivers and operators to ensure that a planned preventative maintenance programme is undertaken on vehicles.

## **Vehicle testing**

- 3.31 The Licensing Authority must be satisfied that vehicles which are licensed by them are safe to operate within its area.
- 3.32 Prior to licensing any vehicle, it must have passed this enhanced test at the Council's appointed testing station.
- 3.33 Once a vehicle has passed this enhanced test and provided all required documentation, a Certificate of Compliance (CoC) will be issued.
- 3.34 If licence holders wish to obtain an MOT in addition to the CoC test, they may do so by separate agreement with the testing station, but will still be subject to the CoC testing requirements and frequency of testing, at the Council's appointed testing centre.

*Note: This would ensure that vehicles can be listed on the DVLA and Police ANPR system as hold a valid MOT, and therefore reduce the risk of challenge from the Police. However, the Council confirms that a valid Certificate of Compliance is equivalent to a MOT test certificate*

- 3.35 The licensing authority may appoint a currently registered MOT station as an Appointed Testing Station who will conduct the tests on its behalf. The authority reserves the right to limit the number of approved garages. All fees payable for vehicle testing must be paid in advance via the Council's licensing team and a test appointment will then be allocated.
- 3.36 Vehicles must be presented for vehicle testing at the appointed testing station. Proprietors and or drivers must make sure they organise the tests sufficiently in advance to ensure that the vehicle remains compliant with the vehicle testing requirements set out in the conditions.
- 3.37 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles are granted licences for a maximum period of one year. Prior to being granted a licence, each vehicle shall be examined and tested at the Council's Appointed Testing Station at which compliance with the requirements is assessed and confirmed by the issuing of a certificate of compliance.
- 3.38 It is the proprietor's responsibility to ensure that all testing and application procedures are completed in order for the vehicle to become licensed.
- 3.39 Licensed vehicles that fail an authorised examination and test and are deemed non-compliant by the examiner will result in the vehicle proprietor being invited to re-test the vehicle. If an existing licensed vehicle fails, then it must not work until a compliance test has been passed. Re-tests will only be undertaken within 7 calendar days and 1000 miles of the original test.

## **Accidents/Accident replacement vehicles**

- 3.40 Proprietors of licensed vehicles are required to inform the Authority as soon as possible and at least within 7 calendar days, of any accident causing damage which materially affects the safety, performance or appearance of the vehicle, or the comfort or convenience of passengers carried. Proprietors must also present the vehicle to the Licensing Team for inspection, if requested.
- 3.41 The driver involved in the accident must complete an accident report form and submit it to the licensing team, giving details of how, where and when the accident occurred.



- 3.42 As the Licensing Authority may be contacted by insurance companies to verify an accident damage report and the details provided, an accident report form is required before the authority can deal with any arrangement between the vehicle proprietor and the accident insurance company.
- 3.43 Vehicles which have sustained damage may apply for a temporary replacement vehicle whilst the vehicle is being repaired. The replacement vehicle will carry the same licence number as the damaged vehicle, so the licence plate for the damaged vehicle must be given back in order for the temporary plate to be released. Replacement vehicles must first be passed as fit for service by the Council's appointed testing station and must meet all the other requirements and standards applicable. There is a separate application form and fee payable for this service and the reinstatement of the plate. Upon completion of repair work, the plate on the temporary vehicle must be returned to enable the vehicle licence number to be re- issued to the original repaired vehicle. Depending upon the nature of the damage, the Licensing Authority retains the right to have the repaired vehicle inspected at the testing station or examined by a Licensing Officer at officer's discretion.
- 3.44 Insurance replacement vehicle licences will only be granted for a maximum of three months, but applications for renewal of temporary replacement is available.

### **Vehicle inspections**

- 3.45 Licensed vehicles shall, at all times, be kept on an efficient, safe, tidy and clean condition. Compliance with the vehicle specifications and conditions of licence are essential and will be enforced by periodic and/ random vehicle inspections by authorised officers of the Council.

### **Taximeters and fares**

- 3.46 All hackney carriages licensed by this Authority are required to have a working taximeter fitted in the vehicle. The meter will be calendar controlled to the current tariff as set by the Licensing Authority.
- 3.47 The taximeter and the operating devices must be sealed by the installer and certificated to confirm that the equipment is compliant. The certificate issued must be available for inspection and the vehicle seals must be intact at any time that the vehicle carries a licence plate, except when at an approved installers premises.
- 3.48 Meters are required to meet the Public Carriage Office Specification.
- 3.49 A table of authorised fares will be provided to each Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence holder, which must be displayed in each vehicle so that it is easily visible to all hirers.
- 3.50 Within district, if a vehicle is fitted with a taximeter it must be used when conveying passengers, the fare demanded cannot be more than that shown on the taximeter. If a fare has been quoted and agreed and is less than the fare shown on the taximeter, the quoted lesser fare must be charged. The charges levied by hackney carriage vehicles operating outside of Huntingdonshire District Council area, do not have to be subject to the licensing authority's control and form a private contract between the hirer and the operator.
- 3.51 The Licensing Authority is unable to set fares for private hire vehicles.

### **Transfer of ownership of the vehicle**

- 3.52 If a proprietor wishes to transfer ownership of a licensed vehicle, they must complete the required application, providing full details of the new owner of the vehicle as soon as practically possible, and in any case within 7 calendar days. A proprietor who fails to give such notice, without reasonable excuse, is guilty of an offence.

### **Accessibility and Equality**

- 3.53 All drivers will be required to be trained in accessibility and equality as a part of the application process. A provider will be determined and further details will be added to this section.
- 3.54 The Licensing Authority takes all complaints of discrimination seriously and will have due regard to its duty to eliminate discrimination, along with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, when considering the fitness of an individual to hold a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire licence, be it driver, vehicle or operator.
- 3.55 All new hackney carriages above plate 44 must be wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV's) and are designated as such. The Licensing Authority will apply any specification for such vehicles as may be provided by regulations under the Equality Act 2010. There is not the same requirement for private hire vehicles to be wheelchair accessible. Existing hackney carriage plates 1-44 also retain protected grandfather rights to use saloon style vehicles.
- 3.56 As Hackney Carriages pick up passengers from ranks and the roadside, all new licensed Hackney Carriages must be side loading. The Licensing Authority will not licence rear loading WAV's.
- 3.57 All licensed drivers must not impose extra charges for conveying persons with disabilities.
- 3.58 The Equality Act 2010 places certain duties on licensed drivers to provide assistance to people in wheelchairs and to carry them safely. There are similar requirements on drivers in relation to the passengers with an assistance dog. Drivers or operators cannot charge extra or refuse to carry such passengers unless they have applied for and been issued an exemption certificate. Further information on exemption certificates can be found in sections 3.77 - 3.84.
- 3.59 Drivers should be appropriately trained in the use of relevant belts and other restraint locking mechanisms to ensure the safety of their passengers in the vehicle. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that they understand fully how to use the equipment.

### **Exemptions, weddings and funeral vehicles**

- 3.60 The DfT have issued guidance regarding the types of activities that may require licensing. In general, the following will not be considered to require licensing:
- Child minder vehicles
  - Care transport workers
  - Volunteers
  - Ambulances
  - Courtesy Cars
- 3.61 Each case will be considered on its individual merits and the nature of operation taken into account when considering if a licence is required.
- 3.62 Vehicles owned by funeral directors that are used wholly or mainly for the purposes of funerals are exempt from the requirement to be licensed.

- 3.63 Vehicles used wholly or mainly for the traditional purposes of wedding ceremonies are exempt from the requirement to be licensed.
- 3.64 The open display of identifying licence plates is intended by the licensing legislation in protecting the public and supporting trade by identifying it as a regulated business. There are, however, occasions when the display of such identification is inappropriate on a private hire vehicle and exemptions may be granted where there is sufficient reason. Further details are given in paragraphs 2.67 to 2.74.

### **Stretched Limousines**

- 3.65 Stretched Limousines are elongated saloon cars, generally used for private hire work and special occasions.
- 3.66 Limousine vehicles used for the purpose of hire and reward are required to be licensed as private hire vehicles and all bookings must be made via a licensed operator.
- 3.67 These are specialist types of vehicles with their own set of conditions, in addition to the standard conditions. Where there is any inconsistency between the standard conditions and these specialist conditions, then the specialist conditions shall prevail. The conditions can be found at Appendix E.
- 3.68 The Council strongly recommends that anyone wishing to purchase and licence a limousine, contacts the licensing team prior to purchase, to ensure that the vehicle will meet the conditions. Applications will be treated on their individual merits.

### **Private hire exemption to display licence plate etc**

- 3.69 The displaying of the external identification plate on a licensed vehicle and a drivers badge is important in terms of public safety and reassurance. They indicate to the travelling public that prior to being licensed both the vehicle and the driver have been subjected to checks to assist with public safety issues.
- 3.70 However there are occasions when the requirement to display an external identification plate may have the opposite effect in the terms of customer safety and could have commercial implications for the operating business. The display of local authority licence plates may also deter some corporate customers from using the service; and in some cases the identification of the vehicle as licensed may allow "high risk" passengers to more readily be targeted putting both them and the driver at risk.
- 3.71 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 requires that private hire vehicles display an identification plate (licence plate) and drivers of those vehicles wear a driver's badge. The same legislation also allows Huntingdonshire District Council to exempt vehicles from the need to display an identification plate and, where that exemption applies, the requirement to wear a private hire driver's badge. The ability to exempt a vehicle from displaying the licence plate only applies to private hire vehicles, and any authorisation from the Licensing Authority is vehicle specific.
- 3.72 It is not intended that a significant number of private hire vehicles licensed by the Council will be exempt from the council's requirement to display an external vehicle identification plate, however the Council recognises that there may be circumstances when it would be appropriate for vehicles operating the type of service to be considered suitable for such an exemption.
- 3.73 In creating its policy Huntingdonshire District Council does not seek to provide a definite list of vehicles it considers to be suitable (subject to use) for exemption from the requirement to display external vehicle identification plates.

- 3.74 Applications for the exemption from the requirement to display an external identification plate on the rear of a private hire vehicle may be considered where the following requirements are met;
- 3.75 Vehicle models must be either four door saloons, or five door estates or five door hatchbacks. Applications will not normally be accepted in respect of people carrier type vehicles.
- a) Vehicles must be of a standard of comfort and equipped to a level equal to or above luxury brands of vehicles such as “S” and “E” Class Mercedes- Benz, 7 Series BMW, Lexus “GS” or “LS” models, Audi A8 Series, Jaguar, Rolls Royce and Bentley saloons. (The highest specification executive type cars from other manufacturers may also be considered).
  - b) The vehicle will be in pristine condition with no visible defects, dents or blemishes to the external bodywork or internal trim and seating.
  - c) The type of work is “executive” in nature. This means that the vehicle is used specifically and exclusively to provide transport under a written contract to a company or person, or by the type of clients who for security or personal safety reasons would not want the vehicle to be identifiable.
- 3.76 Prestige high specification private hire vehicles which carry out contract work such as executive bookings etc may apply for an exemption certificate, which exempts that vehicle from the requirement to display the licence plate and/ or door signage. It also exempts the licensed driver from wearing his badge, however the driver must carry his badge with him so that it is immediately available. The vehicle will still be issued with a licence plate which must be affixed within the boot of the vehicle. Insurance which covers the driver and vehicle for hire and reward purposes must still be maintained.
- 3.77 Vehicles which have been issued with an exemption certificate must not be used for general daily private hire work. Exempted vehicles found to be carrying out standard private hire work will be subject to enforcement action and the exemption certificate may be revoked.
- 3.78 Exempted vehicles must not display any advertisements, signage, logos, or insignias advertising the operating company inside or outside the vehicle.
- 3.79 Operators and proprietors who wish to apply for an exemption certificate must complete the application form, pay the required fee and provide sufficient supporting documentation to establish the vehicle will be solely used for executive bookings. An exemption certificate will be vehicle specific.
- 3.80 There are extra conditions applicable to exempted vehicles, in addition to the standard conditions. Where there is any inconsistency between the standard conditions and these extra conditions, then these extra conditions shall prevail.
- 3.81 If an exemption certificate has been issued and the vehicle will no longer be utilised solely for executive type bookings, the certificate must be surrendered and returned to the council. If the vehicle is still licensed, it must then display the plate and door stickers as required by the conditions for private hire vehicles.

## **Section 4 - Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers**

### **General**

- 4.1. This Authority has a dual licence for both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers. The sections below therefore apply equally to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers unless indicated.
- 4.2 Licensed drivers provide a public service. This Authority will not licence anyone to drive a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire vehicle unless it is satisfied that they are a fit and proper person and are not disqualified by reason of their immigration status.
- 4.3 This Authority generally grants Drivers licences for duration of three years, although it may exercise discretion and issue a licence for a shorter duration if it considers this to be reasonable given the individual circumstances.
- 4.4 Drivers licences may also be renewed, however, if a licensed driver fails to renew within a period of 7 calendar days from the date of expiry of the licence, they will be required to apply as a new driver and meet all the requirements.

### **Fit and proper**

- 4.5 There is no definition of 'fit and proper' in legislation or a fixed legislative process. It is for the Council to determine how it wishes to be satisfied that a driver is fit and proper and to this end, this Authority considers a range of documentary evidence, practical criteria and testing mechanisms provided by an applicant in order to be satisfied of this. Fit and proper could for example be interpreted as being safe and suitable.
- 4.6 Behaviour of a rude or abusive manner at any stage of the application process will question an applicant's 'fit and proper' status and may result in their application being terminated.

### **Suitability of driver**

- 4.7.1 Licensed drivers will come into contact with vulnerable people, drivers are expected to assist passengers with luggage, shopping etc, they will be driving for prolonged periods of time, and will have access to sensitive information, therefore the council must fully assess an applicant's suitability prior to and after issuing a licence.
- 4.8 Consideration of suitability includes character and patterns of behaviour are not limited to incidents which occur whilst the driver is 'on duty'. Conduct or behaviour which may indicate that the safety and welfare of the public may be at risk will also be taken into account when assessing their fit and proper status. The onus is on the applicant or licensed driver to satisfy the council that they are and remain 'fit and proper'.
- 4.9 The Council requires applicants to fulfil certain criteria to ensure that the public are protected and that drivers are able to provide the service which is expected of them.

### **Vehicle driver licences**

- 4.10 Applicants shall be over 18 years of age and shall have held a full driving licence issued in the UK, The European Community (EC) or one of the other countries in the European Economic Area (EEA) for at least 12 months.
- 4.11 This Authority will use the services of an appropriate party to access DVLA records in addition to checking the full licences produced by the applicant.

4.12 This Authority requires drivers to notify the council of any significant changes which occur after their licence has been granted. This includes change of name or address, email address or telephone number, change of immigration status, changes in physical or mental health which may affect driving ability, all convictions or cautions, DVLA penalty points, or any other matter which may question a driver's fit and proper status.

4.13 All licensed drivers are required to wear their drivers badge whilst working as a licensed driver. Failure to comply is an offence under the 1976 Act and local byelaws. The driver's badge remains the property of the Council and all expired, surrendered or revoked badges must be returned.

#### **Eligibility to live and work in the UK**

4.14 This Authority has a responsibility to ensure that it only issues licences to individuals who have a legal entitlement to live and work in the UK.

4.15 Proof of the right to live and work in the UK must be provided by Driver and Operator applicants in accordance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006. As a part of the application process, individuals are required to present original documentation for verification and copies will be made and retained on file. The Home Office has produced a list of documents that can be used.

4.16 If an individual is not a UK or EEA national then they will need to obtain permission to live and work in the UK.

4.17 Individuals may have a permanent or temporary right to live and work in the UK. Licences will not be issued for a period any longer than the permission given to live and work in the UK.

4.18 This Authority will work in conjunction with the Home Office to ensure immigration offences are minimised. This Authority may exercise discretion to grant or renew a licence, or to suspend or revoke an existing licence if an individual is found to be living or working in the UK without the relevant authorisation.

#### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Convictions, cautions and other related matters**

4.19 Under the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847, or under Section 57 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, a council may require an applicant for a licence to submit any information that they may reasonably consider necessary to enable them to determine whether the licence should be granted and whether conditions should be attached to any such licence.

4.20 A DBS certificate is seen as an important safety measure by this Authority to ascertain whether or not a driver applicant is fit and proper to hold a licence.

4.21 An enhanced DBS will be required upon application and every three years thereafter if subsequent renewal applications are made. The DBS check must be dated no more than three months prior to the application/renewal date. This check will detail any criminal convictions and cautions, including those that are spent and other relevant information which will be taken into account.

4.22 This Authority encourages drivers, proprietors, operators and applicants to join the DBS Update Service.

- 4.23 The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 sets out the period after which a conviction would be regarded as 'spent' and would not normally require disclosure of that conviction. However in 2002 the Act was amended to add Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers to the list of 'excepted occupations'. This means that applicants must disclose all previous convictions for any offences, rather than those which are not 'spent' under the terms of the 1974 Act to which questions may be asked as to the suitability of individuals to be granted a licence.
- 4.24 The existence of a criminal conviction or caution does not necessarily preclude an applicant from obtaining a driver's licence. Conversely, the absence of any convictions or cautions does not mean that an applicant will be licensed. Each application will be determined on its own merits.
- 4.25 Existing licence holders must disclose all new convictions, including driving convictions, police warnings and reprimands, cautions, community service orders, restraining orders, fixed penalties and any other matters to the licensing authority, in writing within 7 calendar days.
- 4.26 Under Common Law Police Disclosure (CLPD) the police can share information regarding a licensed driver even before conviction if there is a 'pressing social need'. This ensures that where there is a public protection risk, the police will pass information onto a regulator body to allow swift actions to mitigate any serious safeguarding risk.
- 4.27 If it comes to the attention of the Council that a licensed driver has failed to notify the council of relevant matters which occur during or after the licence has been issued, it will be taken particularly seriously. It shows a propensity towards dishonesty and questions the fit and proper status of the licence holder.

#### **Certificates of Good Conduct**

- 4.28 Applicants who have worked or have been resident overseas in the 5 years preceding the date of application must obtain a certificate of good conduct from the relevant embassy or consulate covering that period.
- 4.29 The certificate of good conduct must be authenticated, translated and sealed by the relevant embassy or consulate.
- 4.30 Any costs associated with obtaining a certificate of good conduct are the responsibility of the applicant or driver.

#### **DVLA**

- 4.31 As driving is the predominant aspect of a licensed driver, the council needs to ensure that applicants hold a valid driving licence and to ascertain whether the licence holder has been issued with any penalty points.
- 4.32 This Authority will carry out a check of DVLA records to ensure that the information submitted by the applicant is in accordance with the information held by the DVLA.
- 4.33 Applicants are therefore required to complete a DVLA mandate form on application and at three yearly intervals thereafter to permit the council to access their driving record. The mandate and DVLA result will be retained and recorded.
- 4.34 Consideration of penalty points and driving offences will be made in accordance with the guidelines relating to the relevance and treatment of convictions available on request from the Licensing Team or on the Council website.

## **Medical Requirements**

- 4.35 It is recognised that it is good practice for medical checks to be made as it is essential that licensed drivers are in good health. They have more stringent medical standards than those applicable to normal car drivers. This is because they carry members of the general public who have expectations of a safe journey, they may have to assist disabled passengers and handle luggage and are on the road for longer periods than most car drivers. The council must be satisfied that licensed drivers are sufficiently fit to undertake the tasks expected of them.
- 4.36 This Authority acknowledges the importance of a driver's good physical and mental health in protecting the public and requires that all new and renewal drivers meet the DVLA Group 2 medical standards.
- 4.37 The DVLA group 2 medical is a recognised national standard developed by DVLA for bus and lorry drivers. The DVLA, The Royal Society of Medicine and the DfT recommend and consider it best practice for licensed drivers (hackney carriage and private hire) to be subject to the DVLA group 2 medical requirements.
- 4.38 Medicals are required for all new applicants and also on reaching the following birthdays: 55, 60, 65 then annually on each birthday thereafter. For new applicants this must be not more than four months before the date of application. Applicants must pay any fees to the registered medical practitioner for completing the medical and report.
- 4.39 The medical examination must be undertaken by a registered general practitioner having examined the applicant's medical history and submit the doctor's group 2 medical report with their application, to enable the council to consider their fitness to hold a licence.
- 4.40 The group 2 medical assessment must be completed by a doctor registered and licensed to practice in the UK or registered within the EU. If the applicant's own doctor completes the medical assessment it may speed up the application, as they already have full access to their medical records.
- 4.41 If, once licensed, a driver's medical circumstances change during the period of the licence, the driver must notify the Licensing Authority within 7 calendar days. If there is any doubt as to the medical fitness of an individual, this Authority may require the individual to undergo a further group 2 medical examination by their GP or an approved practitioner. Each case will be assessed on its individual merits. This includes any deterioration in physical or mental health which may affect a driver's ability to drive or complete tasks required of a licensed driver.

## **Local Knowledge**

- 4.42 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers need a good working knowledge of the area for which they are licensed, because vehicles can be hired immediately, directly with the driver at hackney carriage stands or on the street for Hackney Carriages and by prior booking through a Private Hire Operator in the case of Private Hire Vehicles.
- 4.43 It is also required that drivers should be able to communicate with their customers and be able to carry out the basic arithmetic associated with the paying of fares. They must be able to write receipts. They must have read and fully understood council's licensing conditions,



## **Driving Proficiency**

- 4.44 This Authority needs to be satisfied that a driver's driving ability is competent and of a sufficiently high standard to safely and comfortably convey members of the public. In addition to the mandatory DVLA driving licence, it is therefore a requirement that a further appropriate formal driving qualification be undertaken and obtained for all new applicants and for cases where there are serious concerns as to the fitness of an existing driver to hold a licence due to driving problems.
- 4.45 For these purposes, the standard of driving competence is the Blue Lamp Trust assessment for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage drivers. The test will be valid for a period of one year from the pass date.

## **Council Byelaws**

- 4.46 Hackney Carriage Drivers are subject to the Council's Byelaws.

## **Code of Conduct**

- 4.47 This Authority considers that the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade is a key front line transport service for residents and visitors to our district and has set down the standards which must be adopted in maintaining a safe, professional and efficient approach to transport members of the public. The standards of behaviour are set out in the licence conditions and should be read in conjunction with the other statutory and policy requirements set out in this document
- 4.48 This Authority and the travelling public expect licensed drivers to provide good customer service and behave in a civil and courteous manner. They are expected to be clean and smart in their appearance. The vehicle must also be clean, presentable and roadworthy. They are expected to provide reasonable assistance with luggage or shopping and provide a written receipt if requested with no extra charge. Arrive at the appointed time and not prolong any journey. As professional occupational drivers, they are expected to drive with consideration to other road users and weather conditions.
- 4.49 Drivers must be aware of and comply with the conditions applied by this council and other appropriate legislation. Drivers who fail to observe these requirements may be subject to enforcement action.
- 4.50 Drivers must not operate any equipment which may distract them whilst driving. Drivers must not cause annoyance to passengers during the journey by playing music or constantly talking on a hands free mobile phone.
- 4.51 Drivers must be aware of their obligations under the Equality Act to provide a service and assistance to passengers with mobility problems, disabilities and to take assistance dogs, without extra charge.
- 4.52 This council condemns discriminatory behaviour which is harassing, racist, religiously motivated, homophobic, sexist, or in any way offensive to disability or gender. Complaints of this nature are taken particularly seriously. The council does not however have any power over passengers who use licensed vehicles. Drivers who experience any of the above behaviour should report it to the police.
- 4.53 Licensed drivers must ensure that they fully consider the safety of the passenger, other road users, parking restrictions, street furniture and other hazards when stopping to allow a passenger to alight the vehicle.

- 4.54 Driving for long periods of time, when sleepy or fatigued impairs driving ability, reduces reaction time, vigilance, alertness, concentration, is dangerous and increases the risk of accidents. Licensed drivers have a duty to make a conscious decision to take regular rest periods, to ensure their own safety and the safety of the travelling and general public. Licensed drivers must not drive if they are taking medication which impairs their judgement or driving ability.

### **Complaints against drivers**

- 4.55 In the interests of public safety, this Authority has a duty to ensure that licensed drivers remain fit and proper and will intervene where appropriate. Complaints made to the council are recorded and monitored.
- 4.56 Where serious complaints which question a driver's fit and proper status are received, they are investigated and appropriate action is taken. Similarly, the accumulation of several complaints of a less serious nature about the same driver could highlight that there is cause for concern. Each case will be considered on its individual merits. Where this occurs it may be necessary to contact the driver concerned and/ or proprietor or operator. The driver may be asked to attend the council offices to determine an appropriate course of action. This could be that no action is required, or that appropriate enforcement action needs to be undertaken.

### **Equalities Act Exemption certificates**

- 4.57 This Authority has implemented Sections 165 and 167 of the Equalities Act 2010, which sets out the duties placed on drivers of designated WAV's, which are:
- To carry the passenger while in the wheelchair;
  - Not to make an additional charge for doing so;
  - If the passenger chooses, to sit in a passenger seat to carry the wheelchair;
  - To take such steps as are necessary to ensure the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort; and
  - To give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required.

The Equalities Act also lays out requirements for the conveyance of assistance dogs.

- 4.58 Drivers may apply in writing for an exemption certificate if a medical condition or disability or physical condition makes it unreasonably difficult for them to provide the sort of physical assistance these duties require, or provide physical assistance to passengers in wheelchairs or if they are unable to convey assistance dogs.
- 4.59 The council will only consider exemption applications which are accompanied with a medical report signed by a specifically trained professional that is independent of the applicant i.e. a registered medical practitioner or independent Occupational Health practitioner. The period of the exemption certificate will be individually determined based on the medical practitioner's recommendation. The council may request applicants to be assessed by the council's professional qualified medical assessor, particularly where the period of exemption is likely to be long term.
- 4.60 Where an exemption application has been considered and approved by the Council, the driver will be issued with an exemption certificate and an exemption notice. The exemption notice must be displayed in the vehicle on the nearside of and immediately behind the windscreen of the vehicle, in a manner that readily permits its removal, so that its front is clearly visible from the outside of the vehicle and its back is clearly visible from the driver's seat of the vehicle, when driving. The exemption notice must be removed prior to another licensed driver driving the vehicle. Failure to display the notice could leave the driver open to prosecution, if they do not then comply with the requirements of the Equality Act. Only one exemption notice should be displayed in a vehicle at any one time.

- 4.61 If an exemption application is refused, the applicant will be informed in writing providing reasons for the decision to refuse. Applicants who have been refused an exemption can appeal to the Magistrates Court within 21 calendar days.
- 4.62 Drivers who have been issued with an exemption certificate must inform proprietors or operators that they have the exemption, to avoid any unnecessary distress or delay to passengers.
- 4.63 Licensed drivers of designated WAV vehicles who fail to comply with the duties under the Act will be subject to enforcement action. Drivers convicted of failure to comply with this section are unlikely to be considered a 'fit and proper' person.

#### **Idling offence - environmental impact**

- 4.64 Drivers are reminded that stationary idling is an offence under section 42 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

#### **Plying for Hire – Private Hire Vehicles**

- 4.65 If a private hire driver is parked and is approached directly by a member of the public, the driver commits an offence if the driver takes an active part in the 'booking' process, eg by contacting the operator directly by radio or mobile phone to make that booking for his own vehicle there and then.

#### **Hackney Carriage drivers**

- 4.66 Hackney Carriage drivers waiting on taxi ranks, generally operate a first in the queue system. When a customer approaches, the taxi at the front of the rank will expect to take that passenger. Whilst this etiquette generally works without incident, drivers are advised that the customer may, for whatever reason, choose not to take the first taxi at the rank.
- 4.67 The customer has the choice in this situation, drivers who, whilst waiting on a rank, refuse or neglect to accept a fare without reasonable cause are committing an offence.
- 4.68 A driver must not leave a Hackney Carriage vehicle unattended on a rank.

## Section 5 - Operators

### General

- 5.1 Any person who operates a Private Hire service (who is not a Hackney Carriage Proprietor who permits Hackney Carriages to be used for Private Hire) must apply to the Licensing Authority for a Private Hire Operator's Licence. The legislation requires any person, who in the course of business makes provision for the invitation or acceptance of bookings for a private hire vehicle, must be licensed as a private hire operator. The aim is to promote the safety of the public using the operator's premises, vehicles and drivers arranged through them.
- 5.2 A Private Hire vehicle may only be dispatched to a customer by a Private Hire Operator who holds an operators' licence. The licence permits the operator to make provision for the invitation or acceptance of bookings for a Private Hire vehicle. The acceptance of bookings may be provided for by a variety of methods, such as, in person, by telephone, text, email, internet, smart phone app, in writing, or by any other communication means.
- 5.3 The legislation requires the authority to only licence operators who are considered to be fit and proper to hold an operator's licence and who are not disqualified by reason of their immigration status.
- 5.4 A Private Hire operator shall ensure that every Private Hire vehicle is driven by a person who holds a Private Hire driver's licence.
- 5.5 All work undertaken by private hire vehicles (and drivers), must be pre-booked via a licensed operator. All three licences (private hire vehicle, private hire driver and operator) must be issued by the same Licensing Authority.
- 5.6 Operators can only utilise drivers and vehicles that are correctly licensed. Operators, who fail to ensure that the drivers and vehicles they utilise have valid licences, are guilty of an offence and will be subject to enforcement action.
- 5.7 An operator's licence is usually granted for five year duration, but may be granted for a lesser duration if requested to do so in writing or if the applicant's immigration status limits it to a shorter duration.
- 5.8 There is no provision within the legislation to transfer an operator's licence. New applicants must be subject to the fit and proper test and new premises must also be assessed for suitability.
- 5.9 An operator's licence cannot be issued to persons who do not have the right to work in the UK. A licence ceases to be in force if the person to whom it was granted becomes disqualified by reason of their immigration status. Where this applies, the person must immediately cease to operate and return their operator's licence to the council within 7 calendar days.
- 5.10 Licensed operators may accept bookings and may subcontract these bookings, but only to another licensed operator. However, the operator who accepted the initial booking remains responsible for that booking.
- 5.11 Operators are required by law to keep a record of bookings and records relating to each and every vehicle operated by the operator. Records of bookings must be made before the commencement of the journey. All such records must be made available to an authorised officer for inspection.

- 5.12 The Licensing Authority has power to impose such conditions on an operator's licence, as it considers reasonably necessary. Huntingdonshire District Council's Schedule of Conditions for Operators available on request from the Licensing Team or on the Council website.

### **Suitability of applicant**

- 5.13 Operators are generally the owners of the private hire business. They have access to private information, are responsible for ensuring they only utilise properly licensed, insured and safe vehicles and drivers.
- 5.14 The council requires applicants to complete the application and submit it with the appropriate fee, and supporting documentation, which will be used to decide whether the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold an operator's licence.
- 5.15 As Operators have access to personal information and to promote public safety, before an application for a Private Hire Operators licence will be considered, Operators that are existing drivers will undertake enhanced DBS checks in accordance with the requirements of their Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver's licence.
- 5.16 This Licensing Authority requires all new Private Hire Operators to submit an enhanced DBS disclosure, less than 3 months old, if they are not already a licensed driver. The Council will require a further enhanced DVS disclosure on renewal of a Private Hire Operators Licence, dated within three months from the date of application.
- 5.17 The council will not grant a licence to an operator whose premises are located outside our area. This is to ensure that proper regulation and enforcement measures may be taken by the Council and is in no way intended to be a restraint of trade. Existing operators already holding an Operator's licence beyond the boundary of the district will be permitted to continue under grandfather rights.

### **Suitability of premises**

- 5.18 When considering an application for an operator's licence at a new premises, consideration will be given to the location, the vicinity, facilities, parking arrangements, planning permission etc to ensure that the grant of a licence will not negatively impact on the surrounding area, including businesses, residents and the general public.
- 5.19 Operators intending to operate from new premises will be required to satisfy themselves that they have obtained any relevant planning permission, or confirmed that planning permission is not required. Where planning permission is required, operators must comply with any condition attached to such permission. Whilst any breach of planning legislation will be enforced by the planning department, it may also be used in consideration of an operator's fit and proper status. The grant of an Operator's licence will not imply that planning consent has been given.
- 5.20 Where the operator has premises open to the public, the operator shall ensure that they have taken out Public Liability insurance.

### **Operators' responsibilities and obligations**

- 5.21 The responsibility for applying to renew an Operator's licence, and to ensure that all documentation, checks and associated criteria is up to date, rests solely with the licence holder. The licence fees payable are subject to review and any increase or reduction will be published as required by legislation. The fee payable is dependent upon the number of vehicles operated.

- 5.22 This Licensing Authority will only accept complete applications comprising all the necessary information and documentation. Late or incomplete applications may render an operator being unlicensed for a period of time during which they will be unable to work as a licensed operator.

### **Record keeping**

- 5.23 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, S 56 (2) requires Operators to keep records of each booking. Information should include the date and time of the booking, the name of the hirer, how the booking was made, the date, time and point of pick-up, the destination, the name and badge number of the driver and the licence number of the vehicle allocated and any other remarks e.g. reference to contract or sub-contract work. Records can be kept in a suitable book or on a computer or any other recordable device. If using a book the pages must be numbered consecutively. Records should be retained for a period of not less than six months.
- 5.24 If an operator subcontracts a booking to another licensed operator, both operators must keep a record of the booking. The operator who accepted the initial booking remains fully responsible for that journey even though it has been subcontracted to another licensed operator. The initial operator must record the checks they made to ensure that the operator they passed the booking onto is correctly licensed.
- 5.25 Regardless of which operator fulfils the booking, the operator can only dispatch a vehicle licensed by the same authority that licenses the operator and driven by a driver also licensed by that same authority.
- 5.26 It is not expected that subcontracting of bookings would be commonplace. Customers who book through a Huntingdonshire operator would expect a vehicle and driver also licensed by this authority. The conditions and standards applied by other licensing authorities are different to those applied by this authority.
- 5.27 It is expected that customers booking a private hire vehicle through an operator, receive service from a private hire vehicle or Hackney Carriage vehicle. Specifically, a vehicle and driver that have been through fit and proper checks, vehicle inspections, and are licensed by the Licensing Authority. If the operator chooses to provide service with another vehicle that is not licenced under as a private hire vehicle or Hackney Carriage, the customer shall be made aware of this and the implications of this, and the details shall be recorded in the operator records.
- 5.28 The customer has the choice of which operator they book through. This means that the customer may choose an operator licensed by a neighbouring authority, known as cross border hiring. The legislation permits these bookings and the council cannot get involved in these private hire contracts. Operators should aspire to ensure that their drivers and vehicles provide the highest standard of service, so that they are the operator of choice.
- 5.29 Operators need to be aware of their obligations when it comes to data protection. Where databases containing personal information, such as records of bookings are maintained electronically or if they have CCTV, they are required to be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Further information including a self-assessment, can be found on the following links;  
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/register/>  
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/register/self-assessment/>  
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/cctv/>

- 5.30 The Operator must hold records of insurance and licence expiry dated of drivers and vehicles. No journeys can be allocated to uninsured or unlicensed drivers and vehicles. Those who provide a waiting area for customers must ensure that they have valid public liability insurance.
- 5.31 The Operator shall permit an Authorised Officer of the Council access to records required by their licence at all reasonable times.
- 5.32 Operators must make customers fully aware of any additional charges which may be applied, e.g. for waiting time and for cleaning a soiled vehicle. These additional charges must be clearly displayed in the operator's office and website where available.

#### **Address from which an operator may operate**

- 5.33 When the Licensing Authority grants an Operator's licence, it will specify the address from which the operator may operate. This will be the premises where the records referred to above are kept and at which the Licensing Authority may inspect them.
- 5.34 The Operator must notify the Licensing Authority in writing of any change of address during the period of the licence, within 7 calendar days.

#### **Cleanliness**

- 5.35 Operators are responsible for ensuring that the vehicles utilised are clean, fit for the purpose of the booking and comply with the conditions applied by this council. It is expected that operators have a planned maintenance programme in place for all vehicles it utilises. The testing requirements applied by this council are to confirm a level of safety and quality, rather than to highlight what maintenance needs to be carried out.

#### **Sub-Contracting**

- 5.36 Section 55a of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, inserted by the Deregulation Act 2015, permits Operators licences by the council to sub-contract a private hire booking to another operator licensed by the Council or to any other licensed private hire operator holding a private hire licence granted by another licensing authority.
- 5.37 Regardless of which operator fulfils a booking, the operator can only dispatch a vehicle licensed by the same Council that licenses the operator and driven by a driver licensed by that same Council.
- 5.38 Operators that accept a booking remain legally responsible for that booking even if they sub-contract the booking to another Operator and should record the booking as usual and note the fact that it was sub-contracted.

#### **Cross-border hiring**

- 5.39 In relation to Private Hire vehicles, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 permits members of the public to contact and book a private hire vehicle through any licensed Private Hire Operator regardless of the district they are licensed. Private Hire bookings are private contracts between the hirer and the operator and are not a matter for the Licensing Authority to regulate. In this regard, the Act leaves the selection of an Operator entirely to market forces and the freedom of choice to the customer.
- 5.40 The council encourages all private hire operators to include wheelchair accessible vehicles amongst their fleet. They must ensure that no additional costs or charges are levied by them or their drivers for conveying disabled passengers or assistance dogs.

## **Other obligations**

- 5.41 Operators must ensure that the drivers they utilise are fit and proper to carry out the bookings and are appropriately trained for their role. Operators should be able to demonstrate how they will achieve this by way of a policy to include any training (or checks) provided by the operator, customer service company policies and practices, including disability awareness.
- 5.42 Operators must be aware of their obligations under the Immigration Act and only utilise persons who have the right to work in the UK. Failure to observe this requirement or to provide due diligence checks may be subject to enforcement action by the relevant Home Office department.

## **Complaint policy**

- 5.43 As responsible business owners, operators will understand that the drivers and vehicles they utilise represent their business when undertaking bookings. Operators will want to ensure good customer service, as this builds a respected reputation, resulting with repeat bookings and a successful business. Where vehicles or drivers fail to provide a good service, the operators business can suffer.
- 5.44 Whilst a vast majority of bookings take place without problem, there are occasions where a customer has cause for concern or complaint. Aggrieved customers have a right to complain if the service provided fails to meet expectations. It is also right for responsible operators to attempt to find an amicable resolution to the complaint, without any unnecessary regulatory burden or intervention.
- 5.45 Complainants must be dealt with in a respectful timely manner in an open and transparent way. To ensure this is achieved, operators are required to have a formal complaints policy and procedure which is made freely available to all customers, and maintain records of complaints received.
- 5.46 A copy of the complaints policy and procedure must be given to the council and will be required with all new and renewal applications.
- 5.47 The complaint records must detail specific information, be monitored, and be made available to authorised officers upon request.
- 5.48 The specified information to be recorded must include the following information as a minimum:
- the name of the complainant and how they can be contacted,
  - the date the complaint was made and the time and date of the journey,
  - If the booking was subcontracted the details of the licensed operator who fulfilled the booking and any action taken by the subcontractor regarding the complaint or concern
  - the name of the driver and vehicle being reported,
  - the nature of the complaint or concern,
  - The date by which the operator will respond to the complaint, which must not exceed 72 hours from time of receipt,
  - The action taken if any, by the operator to resolve the complaint or concern.
- 5.49 Operators must also inform the complainant, that they can further their complaint to the council if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
- 5.50 If an operator is made aware of a safeguarding or serious complaint concerning the fitness of a driver, they must notify the licensing section immediately or as soon as practically possible and provide details of the actions taken by the operator.



## **Section 6 - Safeguarding**

- 6.1. Safety, security and welfare applies to passengers and licensed drivers.
- 6.2 This Authority is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. We take our responsibilities seriously and expect all our licensed drivers, proprietors and operators to share this commitment.
- 6.3 Safeguarding is the process of protecting children and adults at risk from harm, preventing impairment to their health and development, which includes keeping the safe from neglect and physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
- 6.4 Licensed drivers deal with strangers, they work alone often late at night, carry cash and may be at risk of violence, non-payment of fares, verbal abuse etc. Proprietors and operators must consider these factors when determining what safeguarding measures should be in place. The council encourages the use of CCTV in licensed vehicles, but has not made it a condition of licences due to the financial burden involved. However, proprietors and operators should consider the benefits and disadvantages of safeguarding measures such as, CCTV, cashless payment systems, communication systems, etc in licensed vehicles in their risk assessments.
- 6.5 Drivers and operators may refuse to carry any passenger, but only if they have good cause, eg a customer's behaviour or demeanour is threatening, offensive or abusive or has previously refused payment. Where this occurs drivers and operators should keep records of why the service was refused.
- 6.6 All new drivers and operator applicants will be required to undertake mandatory safeguarding training before submitting an application. A provider will be appointed and further details will be added. Also to tie into driver section.

## **Section 7 - Enforcement, Compliance and Range of Powers**

- 7.1 The Council has a responsibility to ensure that all licence holders adhere to the standards and conditions applied by this authority and the legislation. It is recognised that a well-directed, risk based approach to enforcement activity by the Licensing Authority benefits not only the public but also the responsible members of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trades.
- 7.2 Legislation relating to a licensing regime and the conditions of licence designed to protect public safety are of no value unless they are correctly enforced by the Licensing Authority. In order to encourage responsibly Hackney Carriage and Private Hire businesses, this Authority will operate a firm but fair disciplinary and enforcement regime. In order to balance the promotion of public safety with the need to permit individuals to safeguard their livelihood without undue interference, this Authority will only intervene where it is necessary and proportionate to do so. Where defects are such that a vehicle or driver's licence needs to be suspended, interference with livelihood is inevitable.
- 7.3 Complaints from the public and/ or any routine enforcement that identifies significant breaches of conduct will be subject to investigation by Officers. The system will serve as an early warning system to licence holders who fail to meet the Council's required standard and as a consistent and transparent method of enforcement.
- 7.4 The Licensing Authority will take appropriate action against licence holders upon receipt of evidence that an offence has been committed. An offence may be a breach of the legislation or condition imposed on a licence, or bylaw, or this policy.
- 7.5 The Licensing Authority will share information with other agencies in respect of potential illegal activities and enter into joint enforcement operations with other agencies and authorities.
- 7.6 The Council will undertake overt and covert targeted enforcement operations as well as ad hoc compliance checks on licence holders. These operations and compliance checks may be inside and outside normal office hours and may involve partner agencies.
- 7.7 Some breaches of legislation cannot be enforced by the council, but may be enforced where appropriate, by other partner agencies, e.g. the Police, DVSA, the Home Office etc.
- 7.8 Every enforcement action taken by the council will be determined on the individual circumstances, will be in accordance with this policy, the council's enforcement policy and the Regulators Code of Practice.
- 7.9 There are a range of sanctions and actions which may be taken by the council, e.g. prosecution, suspension, revocation, refusal to renew, formal written warning, caution, verbal warning, advisory letter, note on records and no action. The course of action will depend on the severity of the offence committed, the evidence available and the risk to public safety.

### **Prosecution**

- 7.10 Prosecutions will be taken where it is in the public interest.
- 7.11 The council will revoke or suspend or refuse to renew a licence where the licence holder has committed offences that put public safety at risk.
- 7.12 Offences under legislation outside that applicable to private hire and hackney carriages may be considered, if they call into question the fit and proper status of the licence holder.

### **Suspension of a licence**

- 7.13 Where a licence holder has been referred to the Licensing and Protection Sub-Committee, the Sub-Committee may order the suspension of the licence.
- 7.14 A driver's licence may be suspended with immediate effect where it is in the interests of public safety to do so. The driver may appeal this decision to the Magistrates' Court but this will not affect the suspension starting with immediate effect.

### **Refusal to grant**

- 7.15 This Licensing Authority has the discretion to decide that a licence will not be granted if the vehicle, driver or operator does not meet the requirements of the policy. There is a right of appeal to the Magistrates' Court.

### **Revocation of a licence**

- 7.16 Where a licence holder has been referred to the Licensing and Protection Sub-Committee, the Sub-Committee may order the revocation of the licence.
- 7.17 A driver's licence may be revoked with immediate effect where it is in the interests of public safety to do so. The driver may appeal this decision to the Magistrates' Court but this will not affect the suspension starting with immediate effect.

### **Refusal to renew**

- 7.18 This Licensing Authority has the discretion to decide that, especially in the circumstances where a licence is due to expire, it would be more appropriate to refuse to renew the licence as an alternative to revocation. Drivers have the right of appeal to the Magistrates' Court.

### **Compliance**

- 7.19 Informal action to secure compliance with legislation, conditions and policy will include offering advice, requests for action, verbal advice, guidance note, the use of written instructions and the undertaking of inspections.
- 7.20 As all licence holders are considered to be 'fit and proper', they are expected to fully understand the conditions and requirements placed on them by this authority and other applicable legislation.

### **Warnings**

- 7.21 For minor breaches of licence conditions this Licensing Authority shall issue warnings as appropriate to the circumstances. A warning may be used for minor, technical or first time transgressions where it may not be in the public interest to prosecute.

### **Complaints, compliments and comments**

- 7.22 Members of the public who wish to submit complaints, compliments or comments about licensed drivers and operators can do so via the Licensing team [licensing@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@huntingdonshire.gov.uk). All complaints will be investigated and responded to.

### **Right of appeal**

- 7.23 Where an applicant or licence holder is aggrieved by the Council's decision to refuse to grant or refuse to renew a licence, revoke or suspend a licence, or impose conditions on a licence, the applicant or licence holder has a right of appeal to the Magistrates Court.

7.24 Any appeal must be lodged at the Court within 21 calendar days of the applicant/licence holder receiving written notification of the Council's decision. The appeal must state the grounds on which the appeal is based.

## **SECTION 8 - Fees, Charges and Refunds**

- 8.1 There is a statutory power for the Licensing Authority to charge fees associated with the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing regime. The appropriate fee should accompany any application or renewal made. Any licences surrendered prior to their expiry, or licences that are suspended or revoked shall not be eligible for a refund.
- 8.2 The licence fees applied by this council are set on a cost recovery basis. They are regularly reviewed and any increase or reduction will be published and consulted upon as required by the legislation.