

Proposal to set up Taxi Task and Finish Group

We are seeking to set up a Task and Finish Group made up of 3 Members of Community Services and Licensing Committee and supported by Licensing Officers.

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group is to engage and consult with the taxi and private hire trade on the two matters detailed below in this information sheet. The group will then put forward recommendations to Community Services and Licensing Committee at its meeting in June 2024.

We shall shortly be entering the pre-election period prior to the elections in May. However, our day-to-day Council business needs to continue, and it would not be fair on the taxi and private hire trade for these matters to be put on hold until after the elections. Our regulatory work is politically neutral so should not impact on the pre-election period, however, it is recommended that the group is politically balanced where possible.

The work to be done by the Group needs to start as soon as possible in March so there is time to have discussions with the taxi trade and for the Group to agree its main recommendations prior to any changes in Committee membership that may happen after the elections. A draft Terms of Reference will be written up and agreed by the Group at its first meeting.

a. Review of Taxi Fares

Taxi legislation allows the Council to set a table of fares which shows the rates for time, distance and other charges in connection with hiring a hackney carriage. The table of fares are the rates to which Stroud District Council licensed taxis must set their meters and it's the maximum they can charge their customer for journeys in the district.

The Community Services and Licensing Committee has agreed previously to look at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) every March. A CPI of higher than 2.5% will trigger a review of the taxi fares to consider if they should be increased. Where a review is triggered a Task and Finish Group is set up who will meet with representatives of the taxi trade and ask them to put forward a proposal, agree a draft proposed increase, consult with all taxi licence holders and then report back to Committee with a recommendation. The CPI is currently showing as 4% which triggers a review of Taxi Fares for 2024.

b. Review of Impact on Stroud District Council's Vehicle Age Policy by Operators that subcontract out of District

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A number of our taxi licence holders have contacted us recently and asked that we review our vehicle age policy on first licensing a vehicle.

Their concern is that, increasingly, some Stroud licensed private hire operators, are subcontracting part or all of their work to Tewkesbury licensed operators. The trade fear that our district could eventually be swamped with Tewkesbury licensed vehicles and drivers. This is not illegal. Under taxi law the operator, driver and vehicle licences must all be issued by the same authority. But the law also allows operators to subcontract to another operator licensed anywhere in the country. Stroud licence holders understand that there must be free competition, but their frustration is that Tewkesbury Borough Council has a less restrictive vehicle age policy on first licensing than we do in Stroud District and so feel it's not a level playing field as Tewkesbury licensed businesses can use older, cheaper vehicles.

Our current policy is that a vehicle must be 5 years old or less when first licensed. Tewkesbury Borough Council's vehicle policy is that vehicles can be any age on first licensing provided they are Euro 6 compliant.

We reviewed our vehicle policy in 2022/2023 with an aim of improving emissions and removing licensed vehicles that were not Euro 6 compliant or EV. The outcome of that review was that we removed the previous vehicle age policy for renewal, (which stated that a vehicle must be no more than 10 years old), to a new policy that a vehicle licence can be renewed provided the vehicle is Euro 6 compliant or EV. However, we retained our age policy of not less than 5 years old for first licensing a vehicle as it was felt this would maintain a good standard of vehicle.

Due to the strength of feeling from the trade it is felt that a Task and Finish Group should engage with the licence holders as soon as possible to consider their concern and make a recommendation to Committee as to whether or not any action is needed.

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