

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 23 MARCH 2023

Report Title	VEHICLE EMISSIONS POLICY FOR TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES FOR ADOPTION.			
Purpose of Report	Consider the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and agree a final policy for adoption.			
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RESOLVES to:</p> <p>a) Adopt the taxi and private hire vehicle emission policy and commencement dates as laid out in paragraph 2.14 of this report.</p> <p>b) Agree to the proposed long term targets for an ULEV or EV policy as laid out in paragraph 2.15 of this report.</p>			
Consultation and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Taxi Emissions Task and Finish Group invited taxi and private hire trade representatives to a meeting to discuss a proposal on 19th July 2022. • Informal consultation with taxi and private hire trade on a draft policy 11th - 31st October 2022. Informal consultation comments were reported in Appendix A of the Report on Vehicle Emissions Policy for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles for Consultation that was considered by Committee on 1st December 2022. • Public consultation 7th December 2022 – 12th February 2023 See closed Consultation webpage. Public consultation comments are Appendix A of this report. 			
Report Author	Rachel Andrew, Licensing Manager Email: rachel.andrew@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	None			
Background Papers	Report on Vehicle Emissions Policy for Taxi and Private Vehicle for Consultation Appendix B Equality Impact Assessment			
Appendices	Appendix A – Public Consultation Comments			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1.1 Stroud District Council's Council Plan for 2021-2026 has the following action:

EC4.4 Review taxi and private hire licensing conditions to consider moving from an 'age' condition to an 'emissions'-based condition to encourage an increase in the percentage of low and ultra low emission vehicles.

1.2 Stroud District Council's current taxi and private hire vehicle policy states that when a vehicle is first licensed it must be 5 or less years old. The licences are renewed annually.

A vehicle licence can continue to be renewed until the vehicle is 10 years old or over. Currently electric vehicles, elite vehicles and wheelchair accessible vehicles are exempted from this policy, this means there is no age restriction for these vehicles on first licensing or renewal. Elite vehicles are high end vehicles such as luxury models of Mercedes and BMW.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 A Taxi and Private Hire Emissions Task and Finish Group has been set up to develop a proposed new taxi and private hire vehicle policy with the aim of reducing emissions in line with the Council Plan. The Group is made up of Councillors Jonathon Edmunds, Nigel Prenter and John Jones, supported by Licensing Officers. During 2022 the group met several times, including with representatives of the taxi and private hire trade. A first draft was developed which was circulated to Stroud District licensed taxi and private hire licence holders for their comments in an informal consultation.
- 2.2 It was reported back to Committee, on 1st December 2022, that it would not be appropriate at this time to impose a mandatory zero emissions policy for all vehicles. This is due to the current high cost of electric vehicles, restrictions in availability and range of such vehicles as well as a limited charging infrastructure in our area. However, the group are still committed, in the long term, to an aim of all vehicles being zero emissions and it is felt that it is important to lay out some targets.
- 2.3 The group also reported to Committee a proposal for an interim policy, based on Euro 6 standards or above, which could reduce emissions by phasing out the older more polluting vehicles. All vehicles registered after 1st September 2015 will be Euro 6 compliant or above.
- 2.4 The Group proposed that the 5 year or less requirement for vehicles when first licensed should be retained to maintain the high standards of licensed vehicles.
- 2.5 The Group proposed that on renewal the current 10-year policy is replaced by a policy that vehicles must be Euro 6 compliant or an ultra-low emission vehicle or electric vehicle. The group proposed that there would be two years grace to allow current licence holders to change their vehicle if needed to meet the new criteria. The proposed date for the new policy for renewals to commence is 1st April 2025.
- 2.6 The Group considered the current exemptions for elite vehicles and felt that these should not continue and that they should meet the same age and emission criteria as other vehicles. The proposed date for this to take effect for vehicles on first licensing is 1st April 2023
- 2.7 The Group made careful consideration of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVS). There are already low numbers of such vehicles licensed and any policy change could reduce the number further and impact on vulnerable passengers such as those reliant on home to school transport. Concerns raised by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group about this showed that there needed to be careful balance between equality issues and environment issues. The proposal therefore was that WAVs continue to be exempted from the 5 year age policy on first licensing but must instead be Euro 6 compliant or ULEV or EV, in other words, WAVs on first licensing must have been registered after 1 September 2015. The proposed date for this to take effect for vehicles on first licensing is 1st April

2023. The proposal was that existing licensed vehicles can continue to renew their licences without restrictions.

- 2.8 Details of the research, and matters considered, when drafting the proposal for public consultation, were detailed in the Report on [Vehicle Emissions Policy For Taxi And Private Hire Vehicles For Consultation and its appendices CSLC.029](#) which was considered by the Committee on 1st December 2022.
- 2.9 Formal consultation on the proposal took place between 7th December 2022 and 12th February 2023. The details are still showing on the [Council's Consultation webpage](#) . This is now a closed consultation. The link was circulated widely including to the taxi and private hire trade, Town and Parish Councils, Ward Councillors, relevant agencies and groups. The consultation webpage had a short survey for consultees to give us their views There was also a [press release on 30th January 2023](#).
- 2.10 There were 32 responses to the formal consultation. Of those 8 were from the taxi and private hire licence holders, 6 were from town, parish and ward councillors and 18 were the general public.
- 2.11 The full results from the survey including all the comments are Appendix A to this report.
- 2.12 The Task and Finish Group considered the results of the survey. The responses were mixed with a balance of yes and no responses to each of the survey questions.
- 2.13 The Task and Finish Group's observations from the survey responses are:
- It was noted that some responders suggested that the proposed 5-year age policy on first licensing may make it expensive for licence holders when buying a vehicle to licence. This could result in licence holders leaving the trade so reducing the number of taxis and private hire vehicles available in the district. There was also suggestion that if the aim was just to reduce emissions, then the criteria could just be based on Euro 6 compliance rather than age. The Task and Finish Group considered these points but concluded that the 5-year age limit on first licensing was to ensure a high standard of vehicle, and that is not a change from the current policy which has been in force since 2017. It also aligns with the policies for the other Gloucestershire District Councils and many others nationally.
 - It was noted that some comments were a made against the proposed removal of the current exemption for elite vehicles from an age policy. The Group recognise that high end luxury vehicles can be more expensive, however it was felt that the exemption was currently being used as a loophole with some trade buying an older vehicle with a bigger engine and higher emissions rather than a newer vehicle with improved emissions. The Group also felt that removing the exemption would improve clarity and create a 'level playing field'.
 - It was noted that there were comments about providing incentives to encourage the take up of wheelchair accessible vehicles. The Group felt that the age exemption on first licensing could have the effect of encouraging the trade to invest in wheelchair vehicle which may increase the numbers. This will be monitored over a 12-month period after which further review could be done to see if further incentives, such as reduced licence fees, would be appropriate.

2.14 The Task and Finish Group were satisfied that no changes needed to be made to the proposal that was consulted on. The Group therefore recommend that Committee adopts the following policy.

Date for Implementation	Application Type	Proposed Criteria
1st April 2023	New vehicle applications and change of vehicle applications.	All vehicles apart from WAVs, ULEVs and EVs must be 5 years old or less. WAVs must be Euro 6 compliant or ULEV or EV
1st April 2025	Renewal vehicle applications	All vehicles apart from WAVs must be Euro 6 compliant or ULEV or EV

- WAVs are wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- ULEVs are Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles with very low emissions and emit less than [75g] of CO2 per km. They include plug in hybrid vehicles.
- EVs are Electric Vehicles with zero emissions.
- Euro 6 compliance relates to emission levels from the vehicle and applies to all vehicles manufactured after 1st September 2015.

2.15 The Task and Finish Group also recommends the following long-term targets as part of the Council’s ambition for Stroud District to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Target Date	Proposed Action
1st April 2028	Review to consider whether a move to ULEV or EV is appropriate
1st April 2030 (Provisional)	Ambition that new vehicle applications and change of vehicle applications will be ULEV or EV
1st April 2033 (Provisional)	Ambition that renewal vehicle applications will be ULEV or EV

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The Task and Finish Group have carefully considered how to reduce emissions from taxi and private hire vehicles. They have investigated the current situation and listened to the

views of the taxi and private hire holders, other agencies, relevant groups and the wider public.

- 3.2 The Group concluded that now is not the right time to introduce an ULEV or EV policy. This is due to the current economic climate and the fact that such vehicles are too expensive, not widely available, and the charging network is still being developed.
- 3.3 An interim policy based on Euro 6 compliance for renewal but retaining the 5 year age policy on first licensing will result in phasing out older higher polluting vehicles whilst still retaining the standard of vehicles.
- 3.4 Setting out long term aims to bring emissions to zero will give the taxi and private hire direction and make the Council's ambitions clear.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications within this report as the decision is to adopt a new vehicle emission policy.

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4.2 Legal Implications

The Climate Change Act 2008 places national targets on the reduction of emissions by 2050. The Council has powers to do anything an individual could, under the power of general competence in the Localism Act 2011. This includes taking steps to reduce Council emissions, which contribute to the local and national targets.

The proposed policy changes, if agreed by the Council, will be implemented and form the basis on which decisions are made on applications for vehicle licences received by the Council. The Council will need to carefully and thoroughly assess the impact of introducing the proposed policy, including the effect on the supply of taxis and PHVs in the area. They should also bear in mind the need for a proportionate approach, ensuring that those licence holders that would not meet the criteria have the opportunity to adapt or change their vehicle within a reasonable time.

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4.3 Equality Implications

An EIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it. The EIA was attached as [Appendix B](#) to the [Report on Vehicle Emissions Policy for Taxi and Private Vehicle for Consultation](#) considered by Committee on 1st December 2022

4.4 Environmental Implications

The Government's website reports that cars and vans represent 19% of all domestic emissions. In Stroud District there are 145 licensed taxi and private hire vehicles, so they

are only a small percent of the total number of vehicles within the district. However, any reduction in emissions from taxis and private hire vehicles will be a move to improving air quality and help reduce impact on the environment. An all-electric fleet with zero emission is the ultimate aim but this has to be balanced against cost and impact on the trade. The policy proposed in this report seeks to improve emissions by introducing an interim policy which will result in all taxis and private hire vehicles being Euro 6 emissions or ULEV by 2025 and will see a phasing out of older, higher polluting vehicles up to that date.