

Comments Received During the Consultation on the Hackney Carriage and Private Vehicle Licensing Policy

The consultation was published on the Public Protection Partnership website and ran from the 08 July 2022 to the 30 September 2022

A meeting with the trade was held on the 25 July 2022 which was attended by only one member of the trade a chauffeur driver.

Members and Officers also met with Home to School Transport providers and the Transport & Support Services Manager on the 08th August 2022.

We wrote to:

- Persons or bodies representative of holders of local hackney carriage, private hire driver vehicle and operators licences together with individual licensees;
- Persons or bodies representative of businesses and residents in its area;
- Home to School Transport Contract teams in the Authority;
- Safeguarding Team of Bracknell Forest Council;
- Local residents and community associations, together with individual residents;
- Parish and Town Councils;
- Thames Valley Police;
- All Members of Bracknell Forest Council.

A total of 27 Responses were received to the formal consultation.

Of those respondents:

- 19 identified themselves as a BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage driver;
- 3 identified themselves as BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage/ Private Hire Driver;
- 2 as BFC Licensed Operators;
- 1 as a BFC Officer;
- 1 as member of the taxi trade;
- and one response was signed by 42 Members of the trade.

The following responses to the questions posed in the consultation were received.

Q2: Do you agree or disagree that the policy is easy to understand?

One respondent did not comment and 96% either agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to understand.

	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	92%
Agree	1	4%
Neither Agree or Disagree	1	4%
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Q3: Do you agree or disagree that the policy provides enough protection for children and vulnerable adults?

Two respondents did not comment and 92% strongly agreed that it provided enough protection for children and vulnerable adults.

	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	92%
Agree	0	0
Neither Agree or Disagree	2	8%
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Q4: Do you agree or disagree that the policy includes everything you think should be in such a policy?

Two respondents did not comment and 88% either agreed or strongly agreed that it included everything it needed to.

	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	2	8%
Agree	20	80%
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0
Disagree	1	4%
Strongly Disagree	2	8%

Q5: Do you agree or disagree with the proposals on vehicle emissions?

Two respondents did not comment and 84% strongly agreed with the proposals on vehicle emissions.

	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	21	84%
Agree	0	0
Neither Agree or Disagree	1	4%
Disagree	2	8%
Strongly Disagree	1	4%

Q6: Do you agree or disagree with the proposals around training for drivers?

Two respondents did not comment and 100% disagreed with the proposals around training for drivers. All responses received felt that the training, especially if it was a refresher course, should take place every five years and there were a few requests asking for the refresher courses to be undertaken online.

	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	0	0
Neither Agree or Disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	8%
Strongly Disagree	23	92%

Specific comments received

<p>Summary of Comments from Trade meeting 25 July</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive of the requirement of licensees having to sign up to the DBS update service to enable the Council to make periodic checks. • Speed of processing applications remained a concern • Consolidation of training would help with expediting the process as would online refresher courses. • Identifying certified external instructors to do driving tests on behalf of the authority would also speed up the applications process.
<p>Summary of Comments received at Meeting with Home to School Transport (H2S) Providers and Officers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current proposals in the draft policy would have a very detrimental financial impact on the existing providers and this would in turn have a detrimental impact on the council's ability to provide a statutory service. • It was already difficult to make money based on the current rates and increasing the restrictions would make it even harder to operate. • The current providers could not afford to replace their existing fleets. • If public safety was the driver for the changes they would be willing to have additional checks put into the policy rather than changing the age of vehicles requirements. • Vehicles were currently subjected to two MOT inspections per year and were therefore fit for purpose. • The cost of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) had increased by around 50% in the last few years. A four seater WAV cost in the region of £19k and a seven seater in the vicinity of £37k. There was not a great deal of demand for these vehicles in the community and the costs of purchasing these vehicles would have to be passed onto the council. • Recruiting drivers was difficult at the moment and the removal of the H2S driver option would further exacerbate this situation.

- If the council decided to adopt a phased approach to introducing new vehicles this should be linked to the tendering cycle
- Speeding up the applications process was needed as it took too long to employ new drivers and could be a considerable wait before they could start earning money. This could be supported by extending the range of providers that could undertake the training.

Responses to the formal consultation

Red text – relates to comments on MOTs and inspection regimes

Green text – relates to arm bands for drivers

Purple text – relates to taxi signage

Gold text – relates to costs associated with the policy including training

Brown Text – relates to medical examinations

Blue text – relates to comments about Uber

Pink Text – relates to wheelchair accessible vehicles

Turquoise Text – relates to enforcement issues for unauthorised vehicles

Comment
<p>Hackney Carriage Driver</p> <p>4 months inspection or 15000 miles reject and do enough twice a year mot and our vehicles are kept in condition.</p> <p>About two badges one to be displayed in vehicle and on wristband Arm wrist bands are a joke no need for these gimmicks these don't improve or increase our business only puts burden we are no in school or cows to be tagged by wristbands</p> <p>BFC Corporate logo TAXI sign. The taxi sign is just extra chargers. no need there is nothing wrong with the old ones</p> <p>All extra expenses we have to dig our pocket, and most drivers are self-employed and losing 3 hours for courses.</p>
<p>Hackney Carriage Driver</p> <p>All extra expenses we have to dig our pocket, and most drivers are self employed and losing 3 hours for courses</p>

Comment

Again on medical examination application in every 3 years the moment if 50 years we have been doing in 5 years interval, so that will cost us again. We are happy in every 5 years.

Why is only considering a consultation policy for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing not for Uber and unlicensed vehicles operating illegally and not pressurising them or have been stopped for checked by BFC licensing officers.?

Hackney Carriage Driver

Its saying specifically policy for Hackney carriage and Private Hire what about Uber operating here to safe our trade.

Hackney Carriage Driver

Look after our trade is fading away

Why no policy for Uber are taking most of our work.

Everything will cost money and time and our trade still not recovered since covid, struggling and more hours on road.

Hackney Carriage Driver

Trade comply with rules and regulations of BFC our trade needed more attention and look after. Why no policy for Uber

With living cost it's going and trying to recover since covid, more time for me and cost as self-employed.

Hackney Carriage Driver

Everything covers for the hackney but not cover for über

I am here station 10-14 hour every day But my situation is getting worse

Hackney Carriage Driver

Well it's not very helpful as uber has taken more than 70% of the trade, though they hardly go through many courses as well they hardly contribute any money to the council.

Two mot yearly is more than enough.

There is no need to change all the taxi signs as Bracknell is a very small town all adds up to extra costs on the driver's. As living costs are very high currently, it will be an extra burden on drivers.

Comment

Since the covid we lost more than 60% off the trade

Hackney Carriage Driver

Normal taxis also have wheelchair access fitted in where we use for both school runs and normal taxi runs. You've set this rule to be waived only for vehicles with council contracts. For the time being all modified vehicles should be exempt

They should leave the two MOTs a year as it is. There has never been cause that this should be increased. It is unfair of the council which serves our best interests to impose yet another expensive unaffordable fee.

-Uber drivers are taking 5 or 6 jobs whilst we are waiting in the ranks for hours on end. They have the means to wait in very close proximity to the station making them more favourable a choice for customers. We are subject to all these costly rules imposed by our council. It seems incredibly unfair that rules don't apply to these drivers. Furthermore you have violated your own principles and policies. How do you insure these drivers are maintaining the welfare and safety of the children and the vulnerable? Why is it one rule for them and another for us? I feel you don't care for the struggles we endure in order to earn a living.

If the rules state that the Taxi badge placed at the front of the vehicle should be visible doesn't it then contradict the need for the need of another armband. I do not feel it is necessary for an armband.

Medical check ups should be as follows:

Upto 50 - every 10 years

Over 50 - every 5 years

Over 65 - every 2 years

Other councils can do the Hackney service with a saloon car. With our vehicles some elderly customers have difficulty pulling themselves up to get into the car. Also the youth favour saloon cars which loses us potential customers. It's very rare when we use the wheelchair feature. Why can't it be the case that every taxi company is required to have a number of these vehicles and the rest of us have a choice to buy saloon cars which are cheaper.

Comment

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage/ Private Hire Driver

Well, council should take in consideration the Bracknell's Hackney carriage taxi driver's day by day bread and butter. As it was at risk because of the Covid pandemic period and had died down in town and many drivers has left the field due to that.

On top of that, another hammer of the fuel price which has risen significantly what impacted even more badly to all our local private hire and Hackney carriage taxi drivers.

We are extremely struggling to co-op with ongoing situation at the present stage.

Therefor our Council should cap all extra expenses in favour of drivers such as

=vehicle inspection gap should continue for twice a year instead of three time a year.

=Medical examination should continue for five years instead of every three years.

=Proposal for new logo and new type of TAXI sign on to every licensed hackney carriage Bracknell taxi in town should be capped for a while.

As Reading and other towns and counties kept away all outsider drivers of UBER and other illegals picking passengers from their town and station area, same way our council too should do something to keep them away at least of 3 to 4 miles radius from our station and town. As some of them are even unlicensed, comes to Bracknell from out of the area for drop-off and keep hanging nearby the station until receiving jobs from the station. Some of them (Not legal Private Hires) we have seen even taking cash payment and drives off. They snatch our livelihood by doing that.

They should not be allowed to stay within the distance of 3 to 4 miles radius from our stations because one way they are pain for our legally licensed rank drivers.

As UBER drivers are licensed by TFL, they should go back to their licensed area after dropping the fare. It doesn't make sense that Bracknell comes within the TFL zone. Just think and use common sense for the distance between Bracknell and London. I think and strongly consider "**Bracknell comes within TFL zone**" is 'Made up' by Uber and their supporters who wants them to carry on making us to suffer. I myself and many of our rank drivers don't want to go for Uber as we want to continue as a self-employed to serve for our locals to take to their destination.

There may be many ways to keep these OUTSIDER drivers away of pick up fares from our station or taxi ranks as Reading and many other towns & councils did.

Comment

If these outsiders are not kept away from our town, especially from the station area, all our local taxi rank drivers' gona continue suffering and struggling to earn their day by day life.

The other point I would like to be considered by our licensing that this consultation policy is for Hackney and Private Hire drivers of Bracknell only. Therefore Bracknell taxi drivers are stopped and checked by BFC licensing authority. That's all fine and understandable. Why Uber Drivers are not? If they are TFL zone drivers then they should be stopped picking up fares from here otherwise our struggle will continue.

One last point I would like to request about prohibiting unauthorised drivers to parking, Blocking taxi exist of the rank, stopping, dropping-off and picking up at the taxi ranks. While enforcement officers are present there, they don't but in officers absent they don't stop to abuse taxi ranks. I suggest to place CCTV camera over the taxi ranks to penalise them. Yes it may be costly but it will be beneficial for the long run for the licensing or ranks who belongs it to.

I would like our council licensing team to help us out on above issues.

Hackney Carriage Driver

It's only covered by Hackney and private Higher based in Bracknell. What about uber and the unlicensed vehicles taking fares in Bracknell which is not been dealt with after so many complaints. As we are based in Bracknell and if our council don't have the guts to protect their own customers what is the point we are paying the higher costs. If we can't protect the safety of our local residents.

Be careful before you vote to implement new rules and regulations. Our trade is still struggling we still haven't come out of the Covid19. 50 percent of Drivers left the trade. Don't ignore us you have to look after us.

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage/ Private Hire Driver

Vehicle inspection gap should continue for twice a year instead of three times a year

Medical examination should continue for five years instead of every three years

Proposal for new logo and new type of TAXI sign on to every licensed hackney carriage Bracknell taxi should be caped for a while.

Uber drivers taking our business and do not pay anything to the council, unfair for us drivers as we're losing customers due to this.

Comment

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

What about policy for Uber operating here it has affected our trade and it's really unfair not to apply any policy for them.

Before the Licensing and Safety committee members voting please look at our taxi trade situation we are suffering with an extra cost and i have to put myself more hours at work .We are still struggling and not recovered since pandemic.

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Still upset with Uber are allowed to operate in our area, taxi trade are suffering needed to be look after. Why no rules and regulations for them.

The Licensing and Safety committee members need to review very carefully when voting before you implementing any new rules will cost me an extra to pay. We are not recovered yet since pandemic and also the living cost gone very high.

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Yes I would like to say that whenever you makes any new rules and regulations its make our life a bit harder and we need to spend more money on it I will appreciate if you could do this to uber as well as we loosing our trade day by day and that's the reason that our 50% driver left the job. Or if possible accept the uber so we can join uber without having london PCO licence.

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Concern about Uber here and no rules and regulations for them.

Before the licensing and safety committee members voting on any extra rules look at our situation

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Unlicensed vehicle operating with local taxis but we are being dealt strictly. Anything new regulations making hard for drivers to survive.

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Why there's no rules and regulations policy on Unlicensed vehicles operating in our borough and taking away the vast majority of our trade.

The Licensing and Safety committee members think before voting on any extra new rules will cost me more money to pay.

Comment

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Policy are good but it should for everyone, uber are tfl private licence operating in bracknell, this is illegal, we Bracknell licence are not allowed in different borough

Anything you implement we still suffer and cost us money and time because of this 50 percent driver left

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

The government's new statutory consultation policy for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing survey is putting stricter rules for drivers and my concern is it doesn't cover the specific areas for unlicensed vehicles operating in our neighbourhood.

They are doing the vast majority of our work around us and the taxi trade has been badly affected.

Why are you not giving any power to Licensing Officers to verify unlicensed vehicles operating in the area?

They should take tougher measures when vehicles operate illegally in our municipality and use our work point (taxi stops at Waitrose in Bond way) for pickups and drop off passengers, mainly for the safety of local residents. We need to keep this taxi trade running otherwise it will disappear.

1- About two badges, one to be displayed in our vehicles and an armband.

My badge is always visible to passengers. Just a one-cost badge and we'll save the environment.

2- AGE of vehicle. Every 4 months or 15000 miles for vehicle inspection.

My licensed vehicle has inspection every 6 months and I keep it in standard condition. Also, looking at my book records, the mileage between September 2021 and March 2022 I travelled 13,187 miles in that period. The inspection is carried out twice a year

3- BFC Corporate logo on the front face of the roof, signing Taxi.

I had spent more money.

4- Application for Medical examination from 45 years then 6 years and then in every 3 years until 64 years.

Comment

Ideally, it should be every 5 years, as we do from the age of 50 onwards. You could check and see in your records if there has been a problem with a driver's health condition that has happened in the past few years.

5- The government are pushing to greener cars on emissions before the committee members thinking to introduce into new policy look at few points about new vehicles are manufactured already with tinted windows and with it has been allowed by unlicensed vehicles by using App application operating in our area, in this case there is no risks of public safety. Now for greener there are no hybrid wheelchair cabs so next best thing is hybrid cars and would be great to have mixed fleet and would save me having to write a Business Case. Electric black cabs are good but too expensive for our small town with very little trade and wouldn't be affordable on financing. Will need to install charging points around the Borough for electric cabs however that would cost millions to do so.

Before Licensing and Safety Committee members make any final decisions about implementing new extra rules and regulations when voting, please review this carefully, if in case it happens, it will be more of an extra cost for me to pay and I will need to spend more hours on the road to survive. This is my only source of income as I'm self-employed.

Especially people who work in offices still work from home and our business is still very weak and slow as you know, the cost of living has increased and will be higher in October this year and will be moments of great concern.

Just for your information the last 3 years I haven't seen any new Hackney driver application and we lost 50% of drivers since beginning of the Pandemic until now. We have less than 60 licensed Hackney Carriage vehicles active on the road the rest have left this trade and changed jobs.

I hope the Licensing and Safety Committee members will consider our comments and review carefully and make the right decision to benefit our entire taxi trade.

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Why can't you delay this further we pay enough, now you try to implement new extra rules will cost me more to pay. I'm worried with living cost.

Before your decision on new rules tell me why is strictly rules for our trade which we haven't recovered from Pandemic.

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

Comment

Uber are taking majority of our jobs absolutely unchallenged!

Any extra policy added on will cost more money at the moment we are still struggling for business!

BFC Licensed Hackney Carriage

[BFC Corporate logo TAXI sign.](#)

All extra expenses we have to dig our pocket, and most drivers are self employed and losing 3 hours for courses

On Behalf of 42 Members of the Trade

It appears that all of the proposals in the policy are going to come with a cost to the taxi trade and so due to the spiralling cost of living crisis and massive energy increase in energy price we feel that unnecessary increase will be inappropriate at this time.

The Hackney carriage trade opinion is that most of the new recommendations would have a negative impact on the trade with absolutely no benefit to the consumers.

We believe that all training courses should be no less than 5 years for refresher, we agree that the First Aid course is very important and agree a full course is needed but we don't believe this is the case for Disability Awareness and Safeguarding the content of these courses are almost identical and most drivers can remember them word for word we believe that these courses should be done together and would not have to be more than 4 hours. The best option for the trade would be to have an online module where drivers can complete in their own time with a test at the end to make sure they understood it correctly, drivers should not be off the road unable to earn money doing these courses. We believe the current criteria for medicals does not need changing, we are not aware of any incidents where passenger or pedestrian or other road user has been harmed due to ill health of a taxi driver, if this is the case it would lead us to believe that the current regulation are still working fine.

The recommendation for 3 tests on MOT for BFC Licensed Vehicles (for every 4 months) will not be needed to the lower mileage the taxis are doing, the average mileage for 2019 pre-pandemic was around 21,000 miles this now could be even lower this would mean having the cars tested every 7,000 miles.

The average mileage for normal car use is around 12,000 miles per annum which would mean the 6 monthly check would still be lower than 12,000 miles, again we would like to ask the question how many people have been harmed by the taxi that was unroadworthy. We believe very few if any which would lead us to believe again that the current regulation are still working fine.

Comment

The proposal for 2 driver Badge (to be displayed inside the vehicle and 1 an extra wrist armband badge like security bouncer) it is unnecessary has never been required before, it appears nothing more than a gimmick.

Also for changing the taxi sign to having Bracknell Forest Borough corporate logo even, we don't believe anybody would notice it, their eyes will be drawn to the taxi font, we haven't got a problem in Bracknell with taxis from other areas using the rank the problem is with Uber and they don't have a roof sign at all.

The conclusion to most of the new recommendations is that there is going to cost the trade even more money with no benefit to the consumer. The trade has not recovered from the pandemic and probably never will, all these would do is add more hardship us and our families that we are trying to provide for, we hope that the Licensing and Safety Committee will look long and hard at this before making any decisions which could lead to the complete destruction of our trade.

Trade Representative

The policy is detailed and thorough and explains each part well.

I would like further clarification on the "AGE" of vehicle. This is in point 24 of the document (I have included screen shot below)

It doesn't mention maximum mileage or age.
Can this be confirmed please?

Officer

It is difficult to comment on whether the policy provides adequate protection for children and vulnerable adults as regardless of what checks you put in place, there will still potentially be incidents.

In terms of whether the policy includes everything that is needed this has already been discussed in a meeting with 2 operators but there is no reference to HTST licences in the policy. The removal of these criteria of licence will be catastrophic for BFC HTST service and operators.

The policy around emissions is weak in my opinion. I feel there should be incentives for low or zero emissions.

In respect of training as discussed in the meeting with operators. PPP's ability to train drivers in an acceptable timeframe has been poor.

Comment

PPP needs more registered providers with the capability to carry out the training in a timely manner.

Suggested training providers:

[NSPCC Learning homepage - safeguarding training and resources](#)

[Spectrum Courses](#)

jane@spectrumcourses.co.uk

Spectrum in particular could possibly make a bespoke course for PPP.

Not policy related but as a Head of a statutory service, the move of PPP to Theale is detrimental. There are no visible officers for my team and I to liaise with regularly. Little communication from the officers that are in Theale. I don't think the BF operators are now being well served by PPP.

The omission of the HTST licences must be addressed.

Operator

In terms of training whilst we appreciate this is necessary for all new applicants, to have the training every 3 years is quite repetitive and could easily be scaled down and maybe kept in line with the First Aid training which is currently every 5 years.. I attended a Safeguarding refresher course last week at the Bracknell Council chambers and the course time was approx 1.5hours; this saved considerable time in comparison to The Blue Lamp Trust courses. Is there a possibility that the same could be held for the Disability Awareness courses; and could the proposed County Lines and Sexual Exploitation courses be included into the Safeguarding courses as these points are touched on in this course. This would save cost and the working time lost for drivers.

We are currently experiencing issues with recruiting drivers due to the length of time it takes for a licence to be issued. This point was brought to Councillor Porter's attention at a meeting held in July. Previously licences would be issued then First aid & Safeguarding courses could be taken in a certain time frame. With the introduction of all courses having to be completed before a licence is issued; we are having increasing issues with recruiting new members of staff due to the cost implications and the time in which it takes for licences to be issued. On average it is taking over 2 months for new applicants to obtain their licences; and most

Comment

applicants cannot wait this length of time to start a new role and do not continue with the application, resulting in significant costs to our business.

From feedback we have received from drivers the current Knowledge test is challenging even if they have resided in Bracknell all of their lives! Is the knowledge test even completely necessary, especially every six years? I cannot imagine in 2022 that driver's do not have access to a sat nav or onboard sat nav. If a driver has 6 years driving experience, I would hope by this point they would have a comprehensive knowledge of Bracknell and the surrounding areas.

With the introduction of new time frames for licence application, please could it be advised how long it would take an applicant to obtain a letter of good conduct from their embassy and also the cost?

Speaking & listening Assessment test - could this be assessed while attending courses/taking Knowledge test. A certain level of competency and understanding would be required to take these courses.

Vehicles - a meeting was held by Councillor Porter in July as previously mentioned mainly in regard to the introduction of vehicles having to be Euro 5 or 6 standard at first licensing or renewal. The huge cost implications of this on Home to School Operators was discussed in this meeting and the impact on the businesses being able to continue to operate if these measures were introduced or the increased costs being passed onto Bracknell council to ensure the service could continue. A phasing in of new vehicles over a period of time was discussed as a more manageable solution.

3 monthly MOT & Inspections - Proposal is all applications and checks are to be submitted a month in advance and every three months. With the closure of Think Ford in Bracknell this week, will this be possible with only one testing station available in the Bracknell area.

Overall our major concern is all the proposed changes are all at the expense of either the drivers or Operators. Whilst we are in total agreement with the licensing committee regarding the Safety of the residents in Bracknell, many of the proposals will not enhance safety but only incur more expense to an already struggling trade. I think the increased measures which means increased cost, could eventually have the reverse desired effect. With increased additional costs, we are finding many drivers are leaving the trade and it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract new drivers to the trade. At the moment (especially in the night economy) Uber are becoming increasingly predominant in this area with no regulation and making no financial contribution to the local authority....

Comment

please can I ask how can this be increasing the safety of local residents or be a level playing field for companies and drivers that have contributed to the local economy for many years.

Operator see Annex A below

Annex A

My most serious concern regarding an omission is the lack of status for Home to School vehicle under the previous rules to continue. Failure to include Home to School vehicles would be catastrophic for our and Bracknell Forest Council's ability to service the students' needs for transport.

Regarding the articles included in the document I have several concerns regarding the imprecise wording and nature of the following sections:

Policy in Relation to Dual Driver and Private Hire Driver Licenses

9.6 Medical Examination

"A medical examination may be required at any other time, as determined by the GP or as requested by an officer of Bracknell Forest Council."

Assuming no change in the person's medical status which needs to be disclosed, this provision is open to abuse as it does not outline any criteria for the officer of Bracknell Forest Council in requesting an additional examination. Also given the relatively few doctors who will perform these examinations coupled with the delay in getting them this section should include something around what will happen if they are made to wait weeks/months for the examination. Are they able to work or are they barred or working?

19 General

"proof of ownerships of the vehicle must include:"

Bullet Point 3 - "The original insurance or insurance cover note for the vehicle"

The word "Original" should be removed from this as it does not allow for standard practises within the industry. Most insurers email you a copy of the policy and cover note which you can then print out, very few policies still provide hard copies of the policy and we should not be in violation due to our insurer's standard operating procedure.

24 Age

- "Where vehicles are five years or older from the date of first inspection before grant or renewal and then at four monthly or 15,000 mile intervals for the duration of the license".

This is unnecessarily burdensome and increases the number of checks by 50% over the current model. I would question the need for this change, I suspect there not been a discovery of a glut of vehicles on six month test schedules that are believed to be driving around in final two months in an unsafe state. Furthermore, the additional running costs to the owner of the vehicle is an unfair increase at this time, as well as providing no provable benefit to anyone.

- "All applications for grant or renewal of vehicle licenses must be accompanied by documentary evidence that the vehicle has been regularly serviced and maintained in line with the manufacturer's servicing schedule"

This is unacceptable as the vehicle test will reveal if the vehicle is roadworthy and to the standards of Bracknell Forest Council, placing an additional burden to meet which could only be reached at great additional costs on the vehicle owner ensures that almost no vehicle will make it to year six. The vehicles are the life blood of our industry and the owners do everything they can to ensure they work, are in good order and will pass their next inspection codifying an adherence to an expensive and often biased schedule laid out by the manufacturer is unfair. It should also be stated that this would end the use of second hand cars as taxis in this borough as very few taxis brought second hand have full service histories. This is perhaps the most concerning provision of the new rules as it will spiral the running costs of the vehicles, if however you do not agree with me and the rule remains I would ask for a grandfather clause for vehicles already licensed as currently none of my vehicle will receive an extension and my business will close.

25 Exterior of the vehicle

"v. have any scratches, cracks or abrasions where the top layer of paint has been removed."

In both the above cases this feels unnecessarily harsh, we would all like nice looking cars and it is perfectly reasonable to ask for any significant scratches, i.e. over 2-3cm long, to be fixed stating "any" scratches feels burdensome.

26 Interior of vehicle

- "The seating and carpet areas of the vehicle must not show signs of:

iv. seat covers that are loose or badly fitted"

Unfortunately seat covers for vehicles, particularly older vehicles are not always available from the manufacturer and sometimes generic seat covers must be used. These generics are often made with several different vehicles, makes and models in mind and as such the fit isn't always as snug as even I would like however it is hundreds/thousands of pounds cheaper than a bespoke reupholster. As such I would like to be rephrased to "seat covers that are loose" as the inclusion of badly fitted is too open to interpretation.

27 Taximeters

"The taximeter must be used for all journeys charged by time and/or distance, and it is recommended that it is activated for all journeys within the district where a fixed fee has been agreed to avoid any risk of overcharging by the driver."

The inclusion of a recommendation here is inappropriate something should either be against the rules or not, this recommendation opens the driver up to accusation for not complying with a recommendation.

30.1 Vehicle Standards

Grab handles

"iv. Grab handles..... All Grab handles must be in a contrasting colour"

Unfortunately we are at the mercy of the manufacturers in this regard, if the handles that come with the vehicle are contrasting colours great, however, if they are not we cannot repaint them as that would compromise grip. I would suggest removal of this second part of the subsection.

External interim step

"iv. have a band of colour across the leading edge which shall contrast with the remainder of the step and floor covering;"

I have a similar objections to the Grab handles regarding both manufacturer freewill and given the delineation of the "leading edge" this would also lead me to concerns around repainting it if that edge was worn down by use, which is almost always is.

"It is desirable for this facility to be available at the offside passenger door also"

This sentence should be removed as desirability can be brought up to drivers/owners if they seek advice from the council and not included in the policy.

31 Roof Signs –

This whole section has lots of problems and it may need to be removed wholesale

"The roof sign must be lit when the taximeter is not active and not lit when the taximeter is in use."

Any illumination at night is preferable to less illumination at night. It also requires a custom systems to ensure compliance.

"The roof sign must have dimensions of 60.5cms long, 17.5cms wide at the middle point.....Licensing Team if required."

This section is too precise and does not allow for innovation.

"The front face of the roof sign must show the words "TAXI LICENSED BY" followed by the Bracknell Forest Council Corporate Logo."

This would require expensive custom signs to be made at great expense.

"The license number must be shown, within a circle, on both sides of this wording."

This would require expensive custom signs to be made at great expense. This would also mean that the signs would be bespoke to each vehicle and not reusable.

"TAXI must be capitals, in Arial font and approximately 65mm in height. The circles must be approximately 135mm in diameter and have the number cut out, 45mm high in Arial font."

This section is too precise and does not allow for innovation and it would also require expensive custom signs to be made at great expense.

"The near side of the sign must show a wheelchair logo in white on a blue background....Pantone code 371."

This would require expensive custom signs to be made at great expense.

"The rear face of the roof sign on all vehicles must show the license number (once only) to the same specifications as on the front"

This would require expensive custom signs to be made at great expense. This would also mean that the signs would be bespoke to each vehicle and not reusable.

"The licensee may use the remaining space...number does)." This would require expensive custom signs to be made at great expense.

This would also mean that the signs would be bespoke to each vehicle and not reusable.

"it may be necessary for some wheelchair accessible taxis to display the sign on the front bulkhead of the vehicle due to height restrictions."

This is vague and call into question which height restrictions will apply as at various places around the UK differing height restrictions are in operation and there is doubtless somewhere in the UK that would exempt all vehicles from using roof signs.

"In the event of the Council's Licensing Officers not being satisfied that a roof sign meets the specification, the conditions of the vehicle license will have been breached and the proprietor requested to remedy the defect."

With the inclusion of the word approximately in one of the above subsections as well as specific shades of colour requested giving ultimate authority to the Licensing Officers is an invitation to discord and will result in many problems for both the drivers and the council.

I would strongly recommend returning to the previous rules regarding roof signs, section 18.5 in the August 2015 document, as they worked without the need for these expensive bespoke custom signs. If not the requirements for specific colours need to be removed as they require us to comply with something outside our sphere of control.

33.1 School Contracts

"All such contracts must specify which vehicles will be used to discharge those contracts."

None of the contracts I have ever signed with Educational Transport over the past 20 years has ever listed the specific vehicle on it, this is because they know that drivers agree to do school runs and then change their minds or they leave the area/the trade or they replace their vehicle etc. As such making it a condition of an exemption means that no exemptions will ever be granted.

33.2 Executive Hire

"An operator will need to demonstrate the existence of one or more contracts with identified business. To qualify for the exemption, any such contract must be for a minimum period of three months."

Taxi contracts with private businesses do not operate the same as with public bodies. No private business would sign anything that restricts them for a period of time, most private account contracts deal only with the terms of repayment, disputes etc. As such making it a condition of an exemption means that no exemptions will ever be granted.

35 Operators Base

"However it may be unlawful to use those premises as an operator's base"

Why not take the opportunity to delineate here what will and won't be lawful?

37.2 Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (DBS)

"An applicant must provide a basic DBS check"

I believe this should be amended to "An applicant must provide either a basic or enhanced DBS check" as those of us who have an enhanced DBS check shouldn't be required to get a lower level DBS check to comply with the letter of the law.

Appendix B Penalty points scheme

2. List of Offences/Breach of Vehicle License Conditions/Byelaws

V3 Failure to have/maintain grab handles - I was unsure what maintain grab handles means, I would like some clarification as to how a grab handle is properly maintained.

V6 Failure to keep a wheelchair access vehicle available without modification at all times - I am unsure what this means, I wonder if there is a better way to word what is being implied here.

V12 Failure to display roof sign on front part of the roof....near to the front as possible - I am unsure how much latitude is given to the Bracknell Forest Officer to decide what is the "front part of the roof", if none, what is the front part of the roof? Is it a finite amount, in real terms, or a percentage from the front lip? Is the front lip where the metal reaches to glass or where the metal is no longer flat? What will happen if the roof is generally convex and does not have a flat part?

V13 Failure to display front door signs - This makes it sound like it is an offence not to have advertising on your vehicle, which I don't believe is the case.

V17 Display sign that does not comply - This does not explain anything? It seems to imply the same contravention as V14 "Displaying incorrect signs i.e. wrong wording or magnetic" if it is a different offence then it would need to be better explained.

V19 Failure to display three or more "no smoking" signs in the vehicle - I find it unbalanced that failure to display no smoking signs results in 4 points but failure to report loss of vehicle plate, V23, only results in 2 points. I believe these points should be reversed as failure to report loss of plate means you are driving around without a licence plate and surely that should be the greater offence.

V20 Private Hire displaying the word taxi - Our Company is JJM Taxis and preventing us from advertising our name on our own cars, apparently to prevent misunderstanding our cars with hackney carriages is unsound. Given the word taxi is a generic word used colloquially to describe all hired transport smaller than a limo or coach, like Hoover is used to describe all vacuum cleaners, I feel its prevention is unjust.

V22 Failure to return plate on expiry of licence if requested to do so by Licensing Staff." - This is too vague, as a person can claim they were not requested to return their plate. I would suggest all people are required to return plates regardless of request and that a time limit should be listed here. Given that Bracknell Council have lost documents in the past I would also like a receipt especially for the return of plate to be provided by Bracknell Council when the plate is handed in.

V29 Wilfully or neglectfully causing letters or figures in the statement obscured - I believe the end of this line should be changed to "...figures in the statement of fares obscured". I would also suggest dropping the "Wilfully or" from the front of the sentence as it implies malice of forethought that can be argued whereas "Neglectfully" would cover all instances and not require an admission of proof of intent.

V43 Failure to obtain written permission to use trailers on Licensed vehicles

V44 Failure to present vehicle and trailer for inspection

V45 Using a dual driver without the appropriate DVLA category code to tow a trailer - The inclusion of these penalties seem strange as Section 32 of the policy clearly states "trailers cannot be used with any licensed hackney carriage or private hire vehicle.". Perhaps a single penalty for using a trailer could replace these three.

V50 Failure to provide assistance to an authorised officer - This is too vague and does not limit what can be asked for under the guise of assistance. Perhaps an alteration to "provide reasonable assistance" would prevent overreach and abuse.

D1 Driver not clean and respectable in their dress - This is too vague, the inclusion of the word "respectable" causes further confusion.

D3 Driver not behaving in a civil and orderly manner - This is too vague, the inclusion of the word "orderly" is the source of my concern.

D4 Drivers allowing noise from(*sic*) radio...or outside the vehicle - This again is too open to abuse, annoyance is personal and often unprovable. It also makes a person guilty even if when brought to their attention they immediately apologise and resolve the issue.

D8 Driver calling out or influencing person to travel...without a prior appointment - This is too vaguely worded as whilst I understand what is being referred to here, the inclusion of the word "influencing" covers too many possibilities and should be replaced.

D21 Failing to take steps to ensure passenger safety - This is too vague, the steps missed should be delineated somewhere in the document to allow drivers to ensure compliance.

D23 Failing to search vehicle after journey - This places all responsibility on the driver and absolves the passengers of any fault for lost property.

D24 Failing to hand found property to the police - As this has happened over the years, I can attest the police can often be resistant to take custody of lost property from us.

D26 Failing to use taximeter on pre-booked journey or fail to charge less than meter fee

D27 Charging more than the metered fare - These two seem to say the same thing yet the first gives two points and the second four points.

D29 Cancelling the fare or concealing the fare on meter before the hirer has agreed the fare - This is redundant as it states the same thing as D25 "Failing to operate the taxi meter correctly" Yet D25 gives two points and D29 give four points.

D30 Demanding more than the previously agreed fare - This is redundant given D27, also if it refers to a quote for a journey then an exemption needs to be included for when the job varies from the quoted journey i.e. a quoted price from Deepfield Road to Bracknell Train station cannot be upheld if when the job occurred the customer says "we need to pick up my friend from Moordale Avenue en route" as the specifics changed.

D31 Demanding more than the fare shown on the taxi meter or scale of charges on the tariff sheet - This is redundant as D27 covers the same infraction.

D32 Starting the fare before the hirer enters the vehicle unless specified in the tariff sheet - This does not account for waiting time if the driver is contacted by the customer and told to wait.

D35 Failure to attend at appointed time or place without sufficient cause - This penalty is unnecessary and should be removed as I can never remember a time when this has occurred without sufficient cause. Obviously our business thrives on good service and repeat business and whenever our service is late or we cannot find someone it is never flippant or because we can't be bothered.

D47 Making additional charge for carrying assistance dog - a clear distinction is needed here between the bad action you are hoping to prevent and a cleaning charge due to an assistance dog making a mess.

D53 Failure to co-operate with any.....by the Licensing Authority - I would like to include a reasonableness clause in this to prevent abuse.

D54 Failure to keep a record of booking in the Private Hire Vehicle...or written - This is redundant as the Base is required to keep this record and there is no benefit to this extra step, as such it is unnecessarily bureaucratic.

O1 Operating more vehicles than stated on the license - There needs to be a time frame for updating the license, otherwise you are stating that no new driver can join until Bracknell Council authorises it or that operators need to always have "head room" in the number of drivers listed on the license which would be an unfair charge.

O8 Failure to provide prompt, efficient or reliable service - This needs removal as it is much too vague, open to abuse and doesn't allow for cause.

O9 Failure to attend a booking at appointed time or place without sufficient cause - Too vague, we would need a definition of "sufficient".

O20 Failure to keep proper records

O21 Failure to keep entries correctly - O21 is redundant with O20 existing

O36 Failure to establish...employing ex-offenders....authority - Given that employing an ex-offender would likely invalidate me from all my home to school contracts, can my policy be that I will not employ ex-offenders due to the cost to my business?

B13 Failure to provide when requested reasonable assistance with luggage - We would need either here or elsewhere confirmation that being asked to take luggage inside or upstairs is unreasonable.

B15 Failure to notify lost property to the Police within 48 hours of discovery - I cannot understand why this differs from D24 for Dual badge holders? Why do Dual badge holders have to hand in property but Hackney carriage badge holders only have to notify the Police?

Appendix C Taxi Drivers Code of Conduct

3.1 You must give your taxi driver license to the private hire operator when.....while you are driving for them. This is unnecessary as the Operator only needs to see and take a copy of the license whereas giving them the original grants unscrupulous operators' coercive power over the driver

9.3 You must not use abusive or foul language....your vehicle - Foul language is too open to interpretation, as offence can be taken for a variety of words that would not otherwise constitute foul language.

9.6 If the hirer requests, you must...sign the receipt - The section "operators name and driver name or license number" should be removed due to redundancy if the vehicle license number and driver signature are on the receipt you don't need the other information.

9.7 You must not cause or allow....whether inside or outside the vehicle - The inclusion of "annoyance" is too vague and not disputable due to the internal nature of annoyance.

9.9 You must treat everybody decently, equally and fairly - The word "decently" cannot be included due to it having differing definitions the main of which is "in a way that conforms with generally accepted standards of respectable or moral behaviour" the ill-defined nature of what these standards are will lead to dispute along cultural, political and religious lines. "You must treat everybody equally and fairly" is a better statement with less margin for individual biases. You could also amalgamate 9.9 and 9.10 into a single statement "You must, at all times, treat everybody equally and fairly & with courtesy and respect"

9.16 You must behave in a civil and reasonable manner...by the hirer - We need a clarification in this policy of "reasonable", a simple clarification of whether "reasonable" is to be interpreted colloquially or legally? I would prefer the legal definition.

9.18 You must always assist...and setting it down - This needs to acknowledge the conflict with 9.13 which advises driver keeping themselves safe.

9.19 You must maintain a log book in which you include any incidents...answerphone at 01635 519184 - This section is unacceptable, Taxi drivers are not Police Officers, Case Workers or agents of the Security Services and as such asking them to undertake the responsibilities of these groups is totally unreasonable. This would place an undue burden on the drivers and leave them susceptible to both physical attack and legal action. The final part of the section that begins "Where you suspect that the incident involves criminal behaviour" and continues to the end of the passage is fine as it only requires the drivers to be good citizens but all of the parts prior cannot be enacted.

9.20 You must maintain a logbook of any complaints...as soon as possible - This would place undue burden on the drivers and the responsibility should be the operators alone.

10.8 Trousers, shorts...one colour of material - This is unfair and feels like an overreach as a garment can be of more than one colour of material and still be neat and orderly.

10.10 (b) Words or graphics on any clothing that is of an offensive or suggestive nature - This is too vague due to offense being personal and suggestive being open to debate

10.10 (f) No baseball caps or hoods worn up whilst in the vehicle - Clarification is needed that drivers are allowed to wear hats to stave off cold weather.

11.8 You must not carry any child below the age of ten year in the front of the vehicle - The current law states that persons of either 12 years old or 135cms is allowed to sit in the front over any vehicle. This rule should be brought in line with the law of the land.

18.4 (b) not to make an additional charge for doing so - We do lots of wheelchair journeys and sometimes when transporting people who are being met by carers or family members we have to wait while receiving them is arranged. As such drivers should be compensated under waiting time charging rules for that delay.

18.6 In vehicles equipped...any unloading activity commences - We do lots of wheelchair journeys and sometimes when transporting people who are being met by carers or family members we have to wait while receiving them is arranged. As such drivers should be compensated under waiting time charging rules for that delay.

18.10 When driving a Hackney Carriage...section 54 Town Police Clauses Act 1847) - I refer back to my objection to penalty D30 as the specification for the job can change and drivers should not be bound if the job changes and this section needs to acknowledge that.

18.13 When driving a Hackney Carriage...section 57 Town Police Clauses Act 1847) - Mention that sometimes customers run off without paying and as such a driver cannot be expected to wait indefinitely.

18.17 You must not leave a hackney carriage unattended...section 64 Town Police Clauses Act 1847) - A clarification needs to be added here as currently you could argue that a driver talking to another driver a couple of cars down the rank is in violation.

18.35 When Driving a hackney carriage....(Hackney Carriage Bylaw 14) - the line "taking it from or to any building" should be amended to "taking it from or to any buildings entrance"

18.36 When Driving a hackney carriage....(Hackney Carriage Bylaw 18)

18.37 When Driving a hackney carriage....(Hackney Carriage Bylaw 19) - Both of these place too high a burden of responsibility on the driver and too much absolution on the passenger for there own luggage.

My objections to Section 19 are the same as the above Section 18 when they correspond.

Appendix D Hackney Carriage Vehicle License Conditions

19 Tyres must be correctly inflated to the vehicle/tyre manufacturers recommended pressure. The language should be softened due to tyres deflating over the course of a day may not have been immediately noticeable by the driver and finding them at fault for a slow puncture seems unfair.

20. The vehicle must be equipped...or foam repair kit) - I would like reference to run flat tyres and any as yet undiscovered equipment provided by the vehicle manufacturer to combat punctures and deflations. I feel it's best to future proof this section as each previous innovation has been an uphill battle to get accepted.

Appendix F Private Hire Operator Conditions

Records - This section needs great improvement

9. (b) the time of the request - This is unnecessary as in the past two decades I have never once needed this information nor can I fathom how it would be of use.

9. (f) The driver's license number - This is redundant and unnecessarily bureaucratic as the operator already keeps this information and a simply check can provide all of it upon request.

9. (g) the vehicle registration number - This is redundant and unnecessarily bureaucratic as the operator already keeps this information and a simply check can provide all of it upon request.

9. (h) the vehicle license number - This is redundant and unnecessarily bureaucratic as the operator already keeps this information and a simply check can provide all of it upon request.

9. (i) the name of any individual that responded to the booking request - This information is unnecessary and burdensome.

9. (j) the name of any individual that dispatched the vehicle - This information is unnecessary and burdensome.

9. (k) If the vehicle...the work is undertaken - This information is unnecessary and burdensome.

To offer assistance in this part as so much is incorrect and unnecessary, the information needed to perform all possible journeys are:

(a) The date and time of the booking

(b) The pick-up location and identifying information i.e. hotel room number, flight number

(c) The name and if possible the contact number for the passenger

(d) The destination of the journey

(e) Any quoted price offered

(f) Any special vehicle requirements i.e. an estate car

(g) Any special instruction i.e. call me at drop off to come out and collect family member

(h) Any payment instructions i.e. charge to XX account

(i) The drivers name/call sign

You could also include requiring back-ups of any emailed booking for a period of six months

11. (d) Maintenance history of the vehicle - This is unnecessary, the council tests all vehicles each year or twice per year, when a vehicle passes this test it is licensed to operate for the coming year. As long as the vehicle owner can prove they passed their test the operator should have no further requirement for inspection.

13. The operator must keep up to date...carry out their duties - This is unnecessary as Bracknell Council already keep such records, asking to be made aware of amendments is perfectly reasonable but asking for us to keep a separate double ledger is overly bureaucratic.

17. The operator must provide a prompt.....at all reasonable times - The replacement of "at all reasonable times" with "whenever possible" at the end of this section would be preferable as it does not place a requirement beyond our capacity to perform.

20. As part of ride sharing...passengers of the opposite sex may not be added to the same booking - This whole section should be removed unless Bracknell Forest Borough Council would like to take an official position on transgenderism and the (im)mutable nature of sex. I would favour an outright ban on ride sharing over attempting to enforce this policy.