

**POLICY ON HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING
STANDARDS - DRIVERS, VEHICLES AND OPERATORS**

The following policy sets out the context within which Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles operate and outlines the standards required by the Council for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles, driver and operators:

1. Each application for a licence will be treated on its own merits. Where however, applications fall outside this Policy they will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for consideration.
2. The district of Bath and North East Somerset is zoned, for the purpose of Hackney Carriage licensing, into the two areas: Bath (zone 1) and North East Somerset (zone 2).
3. Bath & North East Somerset Council regulate the number of Hackney Carriage Proprietors Licences it issues in Bath (zone 1). When the Council determines any application for new hackney Carriage Proprietors Licence it will do so having regard to the recommendations of an independent Unmet Demand Survey. All such applications shall be determined by the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee.
4. An Unmet Demand Survey (for zone 1) will be carried out at regular intervals and no more than three years will elapse between each survey.
5. That any new Hackney Carriage Proprietors licenses issued in zone 1 in light of the results of a survey will be issued on condition that the vehicle is fully accessible and has side loading capability. To be deemed fully accessible a vehicle shall cater for a range of disabilities for example visual, aural and ambulant disabilities. Any replacement vehicle shall be to the same or higher specification.
6. That all vehicles, including new ones, shall be visually and mechanically inspected prior to being licensed and thereafter mechanically inspected on an annual basis at garages approved by the Licensing Officer.
7. That all vehicles will normally be less than five years old when first licensed.
8. That the engine size of vehicles to be licensed shall be at least 1400cc
9. That only roof signs approved by the Licensing Officer are permitted on the vehicle. Hackney Carriage signs shall be fitted across the width of the vehicle and Private Hire signs shall be fitted along the length of the vehicle.
10. That the vehicle licence plates are issued annually and display the registration number of the vehicle, licence number, number of seats, colour of vehicle, date of expiry of licence and make of vehicle.
11. That the vehicle licence plates remain the property of the Council and shall be returned to the Council in the event that the vehicle is no longer used for Hackney Carriage or Private Hire work or the licence expires.
12. That Hackney Carriage vehicle licenses are renewed annually and expire on the 31st May.

13. That Private Hire vehicle licenses are renewed annually and expire on the 31st October.
14. That Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver's licenses are renewed annually and expire on the 28th February.
15. That an Operator's licence is issued for a maximum five year period, and shall expire on the 30th September.
16. The Council reserves the right to issue licenses for a lesser period should it see fit.
17. That all Drivers' licenses are issued as joint Hackney Carriage/Private Hire licences.
18. That the following checks are carried out on all new applications and that a licence will not be issued until all the relevant documents are presented and are correct:

Operators Licences; receipt of a satisfactory application form, 3 references, Disclosure & Barring Services check and the appropriate fee.

Vehicle Licences; receipt of satisfactory application form, vehicle registration document, insurance for hire and reward (public for Hackney Carriages and private for Private Hire), MOT certificate for all vehicles over 1 year old, Inspection Certificate, Meter Test Certificate, (where applicable) and the appropriate fee.

Driver's Licences; receipt of a satisfactory application form, birth certificate, Group 2 Vocational Driver Medical Certificate, check with the DVLA as to motoring offences, check with the Disclosure & Barring Services, 3 references, and the appropriate fee.

All non UK applicants will be required to produce original and certified translations of birth certificate, driving history, and certificate of good conduct or similar check of criminal convictions. All documents must have been obtained in the month prior to the application being submitted. Photocopies or scans of documents will not be accepted.

In order to be licensed as a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire driver, an applicant must hold a full driving licence issued in the United Kingdom,(UK) the European Community (EC), one of the other countries listed in the European Economic Area (EEA) or an exchangeable licence as defined in s108 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and provide a certified and translated driving history from the country of issue.

From 1st January 2014 the Council will require all current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers who currently hold an EC/EEA or exchangeable driving licence to have a UK DVLA issued Driving Licence.

An individual with an EC/EEA or exchangeable driving licence making an application for a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire drivers licence on or after the 1st January 2014 shall obtain a UK DVLA Driving Licence prior to the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Drivers Licence being issued.

If a licensed driver cannot obtain a UK Driving Licence before their existing Hackney Carriage or Private Hire drivers licence expires the new licence will be issued on the condition that a UK Driving Licence is obtained and produced to the Council within three months.

All non UK, EC/EEA, exchangeable licence holders will be required to submit their original EC/EEA driving licence on application for a Hackney Carriage/Private Hire driver's licence.

19. That all applicants for combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire driver's licence have held a UK full driving licence (or an EU equivalent or exchangeable driver's licence) for a minimum of three years, and must normally have attained the age of 21.
20. All new applicants for a combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Drivers Licence must have completed a Bath & North East Somerset Council Drivers Assessment Course training prior to submitting an application for a combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Drivers Licence. This course will be completed at the expense of the applicant and a certificate of completion must be produced at the time of application.
21. That all driver's submit a Group 2 Vocational Driver Medical Certificate, on the prescribed form, on first application and on the first application after the 45th birthday and every 5 years thereafter until the age of 65 and every year thereafter. If so required the applicant shall, whether or not medical evidence is presented by the applicant, submit to an examination by a Council appointed Medical/Occupational Health professional to assess the applicant's fitness to drive a licensed vehicle.
22. That all new applicants for a combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire drivers licence produce to the Council the original Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Services Certificate obtained as part of the application process. This Certificate must be produced to the Council no later than 30 days from the date of the certificate. Applicants who are unable or unwilling to produce the certificate within 30 day of issue will have their applications referred to the relevant Council Sub-Committee for determination.
23. That all holders of a combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire drivers licenses will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service check every three years from the date of the first licence issued. It shall be the responsibility of the Licensee to ensure that they are registered with the Disclosure & Barring Service's online checking service and to keep the registration current as long as they continue to hold a combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire drivers licence issued by the Council.
24. Renewal applications will be delayed for existing Licensees if at the time of a renewal application for a combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire drivers licence the Council is unable to check the status of the last Disclosure & Barring Service Certificate issued in respect of the applicant using the online checking facility, due to the applicant not being registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service. If an online check is not available due to the applicant not being registered a new Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service Certificate will need to be obtained by the applicant prior to a licence being issued. No licence will be issued until the applicant produces the valid Enhanced Certificate to the Licensing Office.
25. That all new applicants for combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire driver's licences undergo a local area knowledge test which will include questions on the law pertaining to licensed vehicles and drivers, local licensing conditions and the highway code and will include a practical route test taken in a vehicle supplied by the applicant. Applicants who fail any part of the knowledge test may retake the knowledge test, however, should the applicant fail a second test a minimum period of three months shall elapse before a third test can be

taken. Applicants who fail the knowledge test three times will have their application terminated and any refundable portion of the fee refunded. Any applicant who has failed the test for a third time may not reapply for a driver's licence until a period of not less than 12 months has elapsed whereupon they may submit a new application.

26. That all Operators, Private Hire Driver and Vehicle licenses issued by Council are subject to a penalty point scheme as detailed in the section below.
27. That all Hackney Carriage Driver licenses issued by the Council are subject to byelaws made by the Council.

That any application which falls outside of this Policy, which includes applications for driver's licences from applicants where criminal convictions, formal cautions or fixed penalty notices are disclosed, or have been "objected to," is referred to the relevant Licensing Sub Committee for determination.

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PENALTY POINT SCHEME

Introduction

1. Licensed Vehicles, Driver's and Operators are principally governed by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Town Police Clauses Act 1847, and conditions attached to a licence by the Council.
2. The primary objective of the penalty point scheme is to improve levels of compliance and help improve the standards, safety and protection of the travelling public.
3. The penalty point scheme works in conjunction with other enforcement options. It provides a formalised stepped enforcement plan designed to record incidences of bad behaviour so as to ascertain whether the licensee continues to be a fit and proper person to hold a licence. It does not prejudice the Council's ability to take other actions.
4. Penalty points remain on a licence for a period of twelve months from date of imposition. As older points become spent by passage of time they are excluded from the running total recorded on a licence.

Issue of Penalty Points

1. Where concerns about a licensee's conduct or the condition of the vehicle are brought to the Council's attention or the Council becomes aware that a Licensee has committed an offence, been given a formal caution, received a Fixed Penalty Notice, breached the conditions of the licence or is the subject of a complaint the Licensee will be asked to attend the Council offices for an interview, with the vehicle if appropriate. Once investigations are completed, letters will be sent out detailing the outcome of the investigation and a permanent record kept on the licensing file. The outcome of the investigation may result in one or more of the following: the Officer may take no further action, issue a formal warning, attach penalty points, issue a s68 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 stop notice, issue prosecution proceedings and or refer the matter to the relevant Licensing Committee for the consideration of a warning as to future conduct, suspension, revocation or refusal to renew a licence.
2. Where a licensee accumulates more than 12 penalty points in any twelve month period, the matter will be referred to the relevant Licensing Committee for determination as to a licensee's fitness to continue to be licensed. The Committee may issue a warning, suspend, revoke or refuse to renew a licence in accordance with this Policy depending on the individual circumstances. The determination will take into account all the circumstance including previous conduct of the licensee.
3. Penalty points issued to a licensee will be confirmed in writing within 14 days of the decision to issue points.
4. The system will operate without prejudice to the Council's ability to take other action that it is entitled to take under legislation, byelaws or regulations.

Any disputes regarding the issuing of penalty points will be referred to the Service Manager who will have the discretion to award a greater or lesser number of points than is displayed on the tariff, if the complaint or breach is upheld. Licensees shall have twenty one days from the date of issue of penalty points to appeal against the decision. An appeal must be made in writing.

POLICY RELATING TO PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS, CAUTIONS, AND FIXED PENALTY NOTICES IN RELATION TO FITNESS TO HOLD LICENCES

Introduction

Each application will be determined on its own merits bearing in mind all the circumstances of the application.

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers are listed occupations under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that a conviction is never spent and can therefore be taken into consideration in the determination of an application.

In terms of this policy any reference to conviction includes formal police cautions and fixed penalty notices issued by a police constable, whether for driving or any other offence.

This policy shall apply to all new applicants and any application by a current holder for a renewal of a licence. Any reference to an applicant shall also mean any person currently holding a combined Hackney Carriage/ Private Hire driver's licence, or Private Hire Operator's licence.

The Council must be satisfied that all those it licenses are fit and proper persons. A criminal record check is an important tool in the fit and proper person assessment process. This policy gives guidance on the extent to which an applicant's criminal and driving records can be used when assessing an applicant's/licensee's fitness to hold a licence issued by the Council. The policy also sets out the minimum period of time the Council expects an applicant to remain free from conviction, caution or fixed penalty notice before he/she may be considered fit and proper.

The policy will apply in the following situations: when a criminal record check discloses an applicant has received any conviction or caution. When the Council is informed that a licensee has received any conviction, caution or fixed penalty notice and when a subsequent criminal record check discloses a conviction or caution has been obtained during the period of an existing licence.

Applications from applicants disclosing an history of offending showing convictions and or formal police cautions falling within or outside of this policy will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

General Policy

1. Each case will be decided on its own merits. Although an applicant may have convictions falling within the guidance set out in this policy, the Council may depart from this policy having had regard to the full facts of the case and having taken account of any mitigating or other circumstances put forward by the applicant. Should the Council depart from this policy it will give reasons for so doing.

2. An applicant with convictions is not permanently barred from obtaining a licence but would be expected to have remained free of conviction for the period of time set out in this policy. However, the overriding consideration in determining whether or not to grant a licence will be the protection of the public.
3. Where any conviction has resulted in a term of imprisonment, the time periods set out in this policy run from the date of conviction.
4. Notwithstanding the periods set out below, during which an applicant is expected to remain free from conviction, the nature, seriousness, frequency of offending and any mitigating circumstances put forward will always be taken into consideration when determining whether an applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a licence.
5. Bath & North East Somerset Council will expect that an applicant will not -
 - (a) have been convicted of three or more minor motoring offences during the previous three years;
 - (b) have been convicted of a serious motoring offence during the previous five years;
 - (c) have been refused or had revoked by the Traffic Commissioners an HGV or PSV Licence within the previous three years.
 - (d) have been cautioned by the police for an offence during the previous two years;
 - (e) have been convicted of an offence during the previous three years;
 - (f) have been convicted of a serious offence for five years
 - (g) have been convicted of a sexual offence within the previous five years;
6. A serious view will be taken of any conviction occurring whilst the person holds a current licence.

A serious view will be taken of any conviction obtained by a licensee whilst he or she is acting in the course of their employment as a licensed Driver or Operator.
7. Where there is evidence suggesting that the safety of the travelling public is at risk and it is in the interests of public safety a driver's licence may be suspended immediately by an authorised officer. The matter will then be referred to the appropriate Committee for consideration. Immediate suspension should be expected in any case involving assault or involving indecency of any description.
8. The above examples are not exhaustive and the Council may depart from this policy in exceptional circumstances if it is just and reasonable to do so. Should the Council depart from this policy it will give reasons for so doing.

9. The following examples may afford a general guide on the action to be taken where convictions or police cautions are revealed:–

Sexual Offences

Drivers of licensed vehicles frequently carry lone children, women and vulnerable persons. Applicants with convictions for sexual offences or convictions of a sexual nature must show a period of at least 5 years free of conviction before their application can be considered.

A conviction for a sexual offence or of a sexual nature will be viewed seriously. Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

An application from an applicant who is the subject of a notification requirement or notification order under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Where there is more than one conviction for this type of offence a period of 10 years should elapse before an application is considered. Any such application shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee.

An application from a current licensee with one such conviction or where the offence occurred whilst acting in the course of their employment as a Council licensee shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Drug Offences

Any conviction involving the misuse of drugs will be viewed seriously. An applicant with such a conviction will be expected to show at least 3 years free of conviction before being considered for the grant of a licence. Where a course of rehabilitation has been ordered or undertaken an applicant will be expected to show a period of at least 5 years free of conviction before being considered for the grant of a licence.

Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

An application from a current licensee with one such conviction or where the offence occurred whilst acting in the course of their employment as a licensee shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Violence Against the Person

Drivers are often placed in confrontational situations with their passengers. It is important that they have the ability to deal with such situations in a calm and polite manner.

Where an applicant has a conviction for an offence of violence against the person such as wounding with intent, grievous bodily harm or assault occasioning actual bodily harm they should have remained free from conviction for a period of 5 years. Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Where an applicant has a conviction for an offence such as assault or common assault they should have remained free from conviction for a period of 3 years. Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

An application from a current licensee with one such conviction or where the offence occurred whilst acting in the course of their employment as a Council licensee shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Dishonesty

Licensed drivers are in a position of trust. They often carry unaccompanied goods and are aware of empty properties, for example after taking its occupant to the airport or railway station. Moreover, it is comparatively easy for an unscrupulous driver to exaggerate a fare by taking an unusual route or demand more than the legal fare as overseas/out of town visitors are often unfamiliar with a city's layout and or confused by the change in currency becoming "fair game." For these reasons the honesty of an individual is of paramount importance when determining the grant of a licence.

Where an applicant has a conviction for offences involving an element of dishonesty they should have remained free from conviction for a period of 3 - 5 years. Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

An application from a current licensee with one such conviction, or where the offence occurred whilst acting in the course of their employment under a Council licence, shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Intoxication Through Drink or Drugs

An isolated conviction for an offence aggravated by drink or drugs should not necessarily preclude the grant of a licence although the Council must be satisfied that it was an isolated occurrence.

Should, however, an applicant have more than one conviction for an offence aggravated by drink or drugs, particularly if close together and within the preceding three years, the Council will take a more serious view of the matter.

If there is any history of alcoholism or drug addiction, or a suggestion that the applicant has been or is in recovery from such an addiction, then a period of 5 years should have elapsed since the last conviction for an offence aggravated by drink or drugs.

An application from a current licensee with such convictions, or where the offence occurred whilst acting in the course of their employment under a Council licence, shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

If so required the applicant shall, whether or not medical evidence is presented by the applicant, submit to an examination by a Council appointed

Medical/Occupational Health professional to assess the applicant's fitness to drive a licensed vehicle.

Traffic Offences

A serious view will be taken of convictions of driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle while under the influence of drink or drugs

Where an applicant has been convicted of a serious motoring offence, for example driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle while under the influence of drink or drugs, dangerous driving, failing to stop or report an accident then a period of 5 years should have elapsed since the last conviction. Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Where an applicant has been convicted of more than one serious motoring offence in the preceding 5 years grave concerns will arise about the applicant's fitness to be licensed and the Council would expect a period of 5 years should have elapsed since the last conviction. Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Where the applicant was ordered to re-sit a driving test or an extended driving test after disqualification, the period of 5 years should have elapsed since the last conviction and any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

An application from a current licensee with one serious motoring conviction or where the offence occurred whilst acting in the course of their employment as a licensee shall be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Applications will not normally be entertained from applicants who have more than one previous conviction for driving with excess alcohol, especially where they have been ordered by the court to undertake any form of rehabilitation. Any application in these circumstances will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Where an applicant has been convicted of minor traffic offences, for example obstruction, parking or speeding offences, which are dealt with by way of driver awareness courses, fixed penalty notices, fine and or endorsement this will not normally be a bar to the grant of a licence provided there have not been more than 3 offences within the three years immediately preceding the application. Any application disclosing such offences will be referred to the relevant Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

Where sufficient penalty points have been endorsed on an applicant's driving licence requiring a period of disqualification from holding or obtaining a driving licence the Council would expect a period of at least six months should have elapsed since the restoration of the combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire driving licence.