

DRAFT WEST SUFFOLK TAXI HANDBOOK POLICY – SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

Introduction and background

West Suffolk Councils (Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils) have responsibility for licensing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire proprietors and operators within the areas of Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

The current policies that govern the operation of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles, operators and drivers are set out in the current taxi handbooks of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury.

These documents include both the elements required by law (through the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 (for Private Hire) and the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (for Hackney Carriages). They also include policies that are specific to West Suffolk. From 1 April 2019, Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils will cease to exist and all their responsibilities will pass to the newly-created West Suffolk Council. We are therefore in the process of developing a single West Suffolk Taxi Licensing policy to replace to the two handbooks currently in use.

The new single policy is intended to ensure that both the trade and the public have a document that fully explains the new Council's Licensing requirements in context for all parties in a clear and transparent manner.

Consultation

West Suffolk councils are conducting a consultation to review the proposed changes to the policy that arise as a result of bringing the two handbooks together. This will ensure that the approach to taxi licensing across West Suffolk is as consistent as possible from 1 April 2019.

The consultation is open to the members of the taxi and private hire licensing trade, members of the public, businesses and other interested groups or organisations. The closing date for submitting consultation responses is the end of: **Monday 5 November 2018.**

All feedback is encouraged through completing the online survey. The results of the consultation exercise will be considered by Councillors in February 2019 when they consider the final policy document.

Summary of Proposals

We are consulting on proposed changes to the current handbooks, using a draft document with changes shown. These are also listed in the table below.

The original document on which the changes have been highlighted is a combined version of the two predecessor handbooks. The vast majority of the provisions had already been aligned between Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council but where there were additional provisions (that were included in the St Edmundsbury handbook), these are also shown.

Section	Issue No.	Para graph No.	Proposed Change Details
All	1.	N/A	Remove reference to byelaws, as it is proposed that these are revoked, and their content included in the new policy document.
Payment of Licence Fees	2.	N/A	Add additional means of payment (as well as cheques and card payments): new online payment portal due to be rolled out Spring 2019.
Private Hire Vehicle Operator's Licence	3.	1	Remove reference to the need for the address of the hirer - it is not necessary to record the hirer's home address, only the booked journey address.
	4.	3	Operators must obtain a licence from the local licensing authority for their home or office address.
	5.	13	Add new requirement, from Institute for Licensing best practice guidance: drivers to keep records or customer complaints and log with the licensing authority.
Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences	6.	N/A 1,2	New West Suffolk policy on zoning to retain the two existing hackney carriage licensing zones for the former areas of Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. We propose the other existing zone of Haverhill should be abolished. The Haverhill zone is not stated or described in the existing St Edmundsbury Licensing Handbook.
	7.	5	Roof sign guidance: add further clarification of existing policy
Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences: Conditions	8.	1	Apply existing livery requirements to each zone. Apply new vehicle age restrictions to all zones
	9.	3	Add provisions on driver behaviour whilst on stand (derived from byelaws)
	10.	4	Add provisions on Taximeter behaviour (derived from byelaws)

	11.	14	Update provisions on In-Car Surveillance Systems – (CCTV) to reflect 2018 General Data Protection Regulations
	12.	16	Remove requirement for former St Edmundsbury licence holders to use St Edmundsbury Borough Council vehicle testing station. A list of approved testers will be provided.
	13.	26	Add reference to proposed new maximum age for vehicles
Private Hire Vehicles	14.	1	Add reference to proposed new maximum age for vehicles upon first licensing or replacement and stricter criteria for an exemption