

<b>DRAFT TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE POLICY AND HANDBOOK</b>	
Executive Summary	<p>By setting high standards for drivers, vehicles, and operators, the handbook will improve the overall quality of taxi and private hire services in our district.</p> <p>The revised clear and detailed enforcement policy will ensure that non-compliance is effectively addressed, maintaining high standards across the industry.</p>
Options considered	Do nothing. The policy would be outdated and fail to take account of updated best practice guidance.
Consultation(s)	2 public consultations took place in April and June 2025. Other local authorities, members of the trade and equalities representatives were all invited to take part.
Recommendations	To agree and recommend adoption of the Taxi and Private Hire Policy and Handbook 2025 v5.1, to Full Council, with effect from 1 September 2025.
Reasons for recommendations	To agree revised policy, considering all available best practice guidance, regulations and research, including consultation responses.
Background papers	<p><a href="#">Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards. Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards - GOV.UK</a></p> <p><a href="#">Taxi and private hire best practice guidance for local authorities. Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England - GOV.UK</a></p> <p><a href="https://iol.instituteoflicensing.org/file/673ef9c33bb4ad0008d7889c">Institute of Licensing guidance on suitability for local authorities. https://iol.instituteoflicensing.org/file/673ef9c33bb4ad0008d7889c</a></p> <p><a href="#">Human Rights Commission guidance. Equality Act 2010. Plain English Campaign</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/licensing/licences/taxi-and-private-hire-licences/broadland-taxi-private-hire-licences/broadland-district-council-hackney-carriage-and-private-hire-vehicle-policy-and-conditions">Broadland taxi policy Nov 2022. https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/licensing/licences/taxi-and-private-hire-licences/broadland-taxi-private-hire-licences/broadland-district-council-hackney-carriage-and-private-hire-vehicle-policy-and-conditions</a></p> <p><a href="#">Environmental Charter Home   Environmental Charter Net Zero Strategy. https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/media/7736/net-zero-strategy-document-v5.1.pdf</a></p>

<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Cabinet member(s)</b>	Councillor Callum Ringer
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Elisa Pendered, Environmental and Leisure Business Support Manager

<b>Links to key documents:</b>	
Corporate Plan:	Developing our communities: engaged and supported individuals and communities.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	
Council Policies & Strategies	Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy and Handbook (2021)

<b>Corporate Governance:</b>	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	Yes. Public consultation required.
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	

## 1. Purpose of the report

To advise members of updated guidance for local authorities and review the existing policy in line with best practice.

## 2. Introduction & Background

The Council's Taxi and Private Hire Policy and Handbook was last reviewed on 25 January 2021 and has been effective since April 2021.

Standards were updated since the current policy became effective, including assessment of convictions, vehicle standards, additional checks on driver, operator and proprietor suitability.

Feedback was provided from users, over the effective period, that the 2021 policy was difficult to read.

A knowledge test was introduced that relied on understanding of the policy.

Review of the policy was due in April 2024.

The above factors warranted a review of the handbook and policy.

### 3. Proposals and Options

It is proposed to recommend the agreement of the revised and circulated taxi policy and handbook 2025 and recommend its adoption to Full Council. The draft handbook and policy was the result of extensive research and 2 public consultations. The following is an overview of areas that were reviewed. A summary of the main differences between the 2 documents is appended.

#### 3.1. Suitability guidance from Institute of Licensing (IoL)

Newly published guidance relating to suitability assessment was released in October 2024. This offers a change in standards compared to the existing statutory standard, including Annex A on assessment of previous convictions. Where there are recommendations from IoL which differ from the current statutory standards, it is proposed that NNDC adopts the IoL guidance on suitability.

#### 3.2. Equality

Licensing applicants must comply with the policy. Following the equalities impact assessment carried out on introduction of the driver knowledge test, it became clear that the existing policy was challenging for certain groups with protected characteristics: those with disabilities or a background that affected language comprehension.

Updated guidance on wheelchair access. Access to taxis and private hire vehicles for disabled users was issued in 2022, after publication of the current policy. It is proposed to adopt this specification in the draft policy.

The policy was revised in line with Plain English guidance and equalities best practice.

Dogs are covered under the Equality Act 2010. The carriage of other animals for disability purposes is not covered. The Human Rights Commission has guidance on how to approach the issue, which matches the advice of the chair of the IoL Eastern Region, who confirmed local policy should offer flexibility to anyone requiring reasonable adjustments because of a disability. It is proposed to extend the current guidance to reflect this.

The trade represented their view that the policy should be amended to permit drivers and vehicle owners to transport their own animals outside of working time. This was not allowed in the previous version of the handbook. The new handbook reflects this request.

#### 3.3. IVA scheme

The current policy contained a section on special event vehicles and adapted vehicles. The guidance did not completely reflect current vehicle approval conditions set out on gov.uk. It is proposed to update NNDC policy to show current vehicle approval procedures. The revised handbook reflects this.

#### 3.4. Fire extinguisher and first aid

Updated guidance recommended fire equipment was only required in a licensed vehicle where the driver had been trained in its use. The current policy required fire extinguishers. The revised policy updates this wording to reflect current guidance.

The revised version of the policy includes easy-to-read guidance for drivers on first aid emergencies. This would direct users of the handbook to find the latest

guidance in the Highway Code. For ease of reference, in an emergency situation and to save time, the current Highway Code guidance would be included and contrast-coloured pages are suggested. Basic first aid training to be introduced for all drivers, following a suggestion from the police.

### 3.5. Changes to contacts

Proposed to update public health contact details, which had changed.

Proposed to update procedure for reporting lost property in line with current procedures and police guidance.

### 3.6. Proposed change to layout

The draft for review was amended to improve flow. It was intended to be easier to navigate.

## 4. Corporate Priorities

Engaged and supported communities. Communities were consulted on all suggested revisions, including:

- safety and suitability assessments of applicants
- vehicles
- the quick guide to the handbook
- the taxi and private hire trade's understanding of equalities

By doing this, the council can improve its support to communities as they move around the district for business, leisure and health.

## 5. Financial and Resource Implications

### Comments from the S151 Officer:

*There are no immediate financial implications arising from the adoption of the revised Taxi and Private Hire Policy and Handbook 2025. Any future costs related to implementation, training, or compliance monitoring will be managed within existing licensing service budgets.*

## 6. Legal Implications

### Comments from the Monitoring Officer

*The Taxi Handbook and Policy is an important document for the Council and those using or who are part of the taxi trade. It assists in understanding the legal framework, requirements, standards and expectations within this area. This document is intended to meet current changes to law, policy and guidance.*

## 7. Risks

Risks of not updating the policy include:

- Legal challenge where NNDC adopted policy is out of step with national standards.
- Confusion for applicants
- Loss relating to refunds where work has been delivered and then refunded in accordance with current policy.
- Loss of vigilance and competency in some areas of the trade, due to out-of-date standards, lack of compliance monitoring.

## 8. Net ZeroTarget

The Council's Net Zero Strategy & Action Plan requires all decisions to be assessed and tested for consistency against the Net Zero 2030 Strategy & Climate Action Plan. The council consulted with the climate change team and agreed significant reductions for all-electric vehicles on an ongoing basis.

## 9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality.

### 9.1. Conclusions of EQIA for users of the handbook:

- The revised handbook has been updated throughout to remove any gender references.
- Where possible, the wording of all content has been reviewed in line with Plain English Campaign guidance and complex language replaced. Taxi byelaws being historic and the legislation referenced within the handbook are not within the remit of this review to amend, therefore they have been explained in the body text and appended in their original form, for referencing if required. The policy can be understood without reference to these texts, but they are included for transparency and the council accepts they are not written in an accessible style. No test will be performed that relies on the original wording in these referenced texts.
- Applicants to the licensing authority are restricted to those who have a minimum English reading age of 9. This is the average reading age of an adult in North Norfolk. This standard provides inequity for those who do not meet the average reading age. The council acknowledges the standard required and the natural inequity this implies. Applicants are invited to develop their skills and reapply every 12 months, until they meet the standard.
- Applicants without technical capacity from various groups may be disadvantaged, however, they are welcome to use an agent to submit applications, thereby removing any barriers.

- All applicants may be accompanied by a person who can assist them with any aspect of the licensing procedure. They may not be assisted with the knowledge test, but reasonable adjustments can be requested and a question on this is included as part of the booking process.

9.2. Equality for passengers using taxi and private hire services is covered in 3.2.

## **10. Community Safety issues**

Community safety is the primary concern of licensing authorities. This was the key consideration in preparing the draft revised version.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The 2021 NNDC Hackney Carriage and private hire policy and handbook has been superseded by current guidance on suitability assessments.

Feedback from users of the policy has highlighted accessibility concerns that feed into a wider recommended focus on accessibility and equality standards for the trade.

Review of the policy is overdue. Public consultation was widely undertaken. The taxi trade association was regularly updated on progress and worked with officers to suggest some of the changes.

### **Recommendation:**

To recommend agreement of the Taxi and Private Hire Policy and Handbook 2025 v5.1 and recommend its adoption to Full Council, with effect from 1 September 2025.

## Appendix A

### Taxi policy comparison of old and new versions

#### Overall Purpose & Scope

Area	v4.0 (2021)	Draft v5.1 (2025)
<b>Purpose</b>	Safety and proper conduct in taxi/private hire licensing	Same purpose, with broader framing around public transport safety
<b>Scope</b>	Operators, proprietors, drivers	Identical, though more explicitly includes rural context of North Norfolk
<b>Language</b>	Legalistic, technical	Simplified, plain English and customer-friendly tone

#### Structure & Content

Section	v4.0 (2021)	Draft v5.1 (2025)
<b>Contents Page</b>	Basic structure	Much more detailed and organized (58 sections + annexes)
<b>Definitions/Terminology</b>	Present but not comprehensive	Thorough glossary of terms
<b>Equality</b>	Equality Act mentioned briefly	Dedicated Equality & Hate Crime sections (detailed)
<b>Policy Format</b>	Written in paragraph style	Plain English with numbered subsections
<b>Clarity</b>	Text-heavy	Focus on accessibility, user links, and digital resources

#### Licensing & Compliance

Area	v4.0 (2021)	Draft v5.1 (2025)
<b>"Fit and Proper" Definition</b>	Legal basis referenced	Rephrased as "safe and suitable" with real-world examples
<b>Applications</b>	Standard requirements	Includes extensive document checklist, test guidance, and online prep
<b>Medical</b>	Group 2 standard	Same standard with more process detail
<b>DBS Checks</b>	Enhanced required	Detailed renewal and DBS Update Service requirements

Area	v4.0 (2021)	Draft v5.1 (2025)
Driver Conduct	Expected	Strongly detailed, with specific prohibited behaviour and presentation guidelines
<b>Vehicle Standards</b>		
Requirement	v4.0 (2021)	Draft v5.1 (2025)
Inspections	Annual	More rigorous, including emission & safety rating encouragement
CCTV	Mentioned	Specific GDPR-compliant guidance
LPG & Electric Vehicles	Basic info	Detailed conversion policies, support for green vehicles
Tinted Windows	Standard DVLA rules	Same, but now explicitly documented
Vehicle Identification	Plates required	Specific placement, signage, and visual clarity emphasized
<b>Operator Responsibilities</b>		
Item	v4.0 (2021)	Draft v5.1 (2025)
Records	Basic requirements	Extensive: names, times, route info, staff DBS, accessibility info
Complaints Handling	Not formalized	Mandatory log and inspection-ready records
Passenger Safety	Mentioned	Section on death of passenger, hate crime, accessibility, etc.

#### New & Noteworthy Additions in Draft v5.1

- **Death of a Passenger Protocol**
- **Hate Crime Awareness & Reporting**
- **Safeguarding Resources and Links**
- **Lost Property Protocols**
- **Standard for Driver Attire and Hygiene**
- **Plain English Guidance Adoption**

#### Summary

The **2025 Draft v5.1 Handbook** is a significant revision of the 2021 version. It:

- Incorporates clearer language and formatting,
- Expands on inclusivity, safety, and compliance procedures,



- Provides detailed operational and behavioural standards for all license holders,
- Includes online resources and interactive links,
- Aligns with updated government guidance and equality legislation