

To: All licenced taxi drivers in Babergh and Mid Suffolk

## Update from the Licensing Team



20 September 2022

### Taxi updates and news

We wanted to take the opportunity to update you, our local taxi trade, on some of the key projects over coming months and provide clarity over some recent changes.

You can find lots of information below including where we're seeking your feedback. However, should you have any further queries please don't hesitate to [drop us an email](#)

#### **1. Hackney Carriage, Private Hire Operator, Vehicle & Driver Policy 2022-2025**

We recently sent a policy update note to the trade on 5 August 2022 clarifying the policy stated above.

Prior to this update, we appreciate that some drivers and operators may have purchased vehicles over 8 years old on the reasonable assumption that they would be licensed.

We are of course keen to financially support any driver or operator affected during the period, where we can. Therefore, following legal advice and by exceptional circumstance, any drivers, or operators with proof of purchase of buying a vehicle 8-years-old or above between 5 April and 5 August 2022 only, may present their vehicle at first registration for licensing.

As expected, in all other cases and in addition to where the above may apply, all licensing conditions within the policy will need to be met for a licence to be granted.

We also wanted to clarify, that vehicles **only** need to be less than eight years old when first licenced. Existing licensed vehicles can be more than 10 years old (there is no upper age limit in this case), but they must be checked more frequently.

The policy will be considered for review from summer 2023. During any review, you will be consulted as part of the process so your views and ideas can be considered.

## **2. Fares review**

We will soon be contacting all drivers, to gauge your opinion on whether to review the Hackney table of fares tariff in both districts. These were last reviewed in November 2021 in Babergh and July 2020 in Mid Suffolk.

While these would normally be reviewed around every three years, the cost of living has risen significantly, and we have had some requests for a review from some of the trade. Therefore, we are keen to seek everyone's thoughts on carrying out a review first before any final decision is made. Look for further information from the team soon.

Should the consensus from the trade be in favour of a review, we will of course be back in touch at a later date to discuss tariff options with you, as your views will be vital in ensuring any new table of fares remains clear, concise, and transparent for all.

## **3. Taxi ranks**

Feedback from some of the trade has indicated there may be a need for more taxi ranks within Babergh and Mid-Suffolk districts.

We would welcome you to share your suggestions around potential locations and number of ranks you feel are required, so that we can approach Suffolk County Council and other stakeholders to explore what is possible.

So that we can create a full list of suggestions to put forward, we'd be grateful if you could please email us with your ideas for potential taxi ranks before 31 October.

#### **4. Electric vehicle charging**

We've worked with the Energy Saving Trust to create [a survey](#) to capture your views regarding electric vehicles (EVs) and switching to ultra-low emission vehicles, which are essential in understanding the issues surrounding this topic. [The survey](#) is open for several weeks and will close on 11 October 2022. Please do make sure you have your say.

Once all responses have been collated, we will be inviting a representative number of the trade to a focus group specifically on EVs. The group will explore the topic further and seek the trades' views on what needs to happen to increase use of EVs in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, including the required local infrastructure.

We'll also continue to work closely with the Energy Saving Trust in this space, so they can share their advice and guidance.

#### **5. Setting up a Taxi Association(s)**

We would welcome a discussion with the trade on whether there would be appetite for a local taxi association(s) in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, how this could be set up, and work in practice.

This approach can work well to ensure that we can collaborate most effectively together to share ideas and inform policy and the future of taxi licensing in the districts.

As an example, the pub trade has a similar association named '*Pub Watch*' run by licensees and this has proven highly effective. There's also the option to join the National Taxi Association who give advice on setting up a local association or to do something independent.

#### **6. Compliments**

We work extremely hard to ensure you receive an efficient and streamlined taxi licensing service.

We have had some fantastic feedback from licensees across the board not just on taxi licensing. We wanted to say a big thank you to those drivers and operators that have been patient and supportive to the team, while they carry out a demanding role against tight deadlines.

## **7. Licensing team changes**

Our new corporate manager of public protection, Tracy Howard, joined us in June 2022. Her role includes the strategic and operational management of the licensing service along with environmental health functions.

Our new licensing team leader, Kate Pearsall, is also expected start with us in November 2022, with Neil Gardiner covering this roll on an interim basis in the meantime.

Our licensing officers Kerry, Kay and Katherine continue to do a great job in providing our licensees with regular support and advice.

As always, the team are happy to discuss any issues and ideas you might have, so please don't hesitate to [drop us an email](#) or telephone 0300 123 4000 Option 6