

Taxi Forum Meeting Notes

14 February 2025

Civic Centre, Addlestone at 11am

Attended by two drivers, Cllr Harnden (Chair of the Regulatory Committee), Kelly Dufield (KD), Jill Tyne (JT), Nicola Clarke and Clare Pinnock (taking notes).

KD welcomed attendees and it was agreed to consider further whether future meetings were viable in terms of numbers attending.

1. Fees and charges

KD informed everyone that the annual fees for 2025-26 were approved by the Regulatory Committee in November 2024, advertised as per the requirements. No objections were received to the adoption of the revised fees, which come into effect from 1st April 2025.

Licence fees have increased on a cost recovery basis in line with the legislation which permits Councils to recover the costs of issue, administration and additionally, in the case of drivers, compliance.

- Vehicles: 7 – 10% increase
- Drivers: 16 – 17% increase
- Private Hire Operators: 14 – 16% increase

It was hoped there would be less need for change in 2026.

2. New Drivers Licence format

KD informed everyone that Drivers' licences had been substantially redesigned and Vehicle licences would also be updated in due course. People were reminded that the RBC licence was not a badge or plate. It was an important document which should be kept safely in the vehicle and available for an authorised officer to view on request. It was agreed the new format was more professional and official looking. Below is an example Drivers licence displayed at the forum.

Runnymede
BOROUGH COUNCIL

TOWN POLICE CLAUSES ACT 1847
AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976

The said Council hereby licence:

Name:
Address:
Date of Birth:

Photo

to act as a driver of any Hackney Carriage to ply for hire within the district of the said Council or to act as a driver of any Private Hire Vehicle licensed as such by the said Council.
Subject to the consent of the proprietor of such a vehicle and to such bylaws as are, or may from time to time, be in force in the said district.

LICENCE TYPE : COMBINED (HACKNEY CARRIAGE / PRIVATE HIRE)

LICENCE Number

Start date:
Expiry Date:

Signed:-
Corporate Head of Environmental Services Date of Issue:

CONDITIONS

NOTE: This licence is not transferable and must be renewed prior to expiry. The holder must forthwith notify any change of address to: Corporate Head of Environmental Services.

If you are aggrieved by any condition attached to the grant of this licence you may appeal to a Magistrates' Court. Such appeals are to be made within 21 days of the date of issue of the licence and should be made to Surrey Magistrates' Courts Service, Mary Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU21 4PS

Note
It is your responsibility to ensure you abide by the Bylaws and statutory provisions pertaining to this licence

Runnymede Borough Council, Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2AH
Telephone: 01932 838383 Emails: licensing@runnymede.gov.uk

3. Taxi Licensing Policy

KD reminded those present that the Council's Regulatory Committee approved the revised policy in January 2025 which comes into effect from 1st April 2025 and is valid for 5 years.

There was only 1 response (from Surrey Police) during the consultation period which resulted in new conditions being added regarding illegal stealth/ghost plates.

4. Hackney carriage ranks

Feedback from SRW permit system was invited. It was commented that vehicles were still parking in the pick up areas which made access difficult.

Alternative provision of ranks in Egham was limited. School Lane was unsuitable with the loss of 7 existing parking spaces to the new residential development on the Nexus site. This also involved the relocation of the existing vehicular access to Egham Station carpark to the east, further down School Lane.

JT had discussed the viability of other areas such as outside Strode's College, but those present thought this location was too crowded and far away from where it was needed in the centre of Egham around the Everyman cinema. The loss of spaces along Church Road was a further inconvenience. The installation of electric charging points near St John's church had precluded that area too.

It was agreed that Officers would re-approach the Council's Assets and Regeneration team with regard to the Waitrose carpark and drivers being added to the accepted/white list, and the new development, noting Waitrose permits were currently only for blue badge holder vehicles.

5. Immediate revocation case and national register

KD brought to people's attention a recent revocation of a driver's licence under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 which stipulated provisions for suspending and revoking licences, where it was appropriate for the Authority to do so.

It was noted that a taxi or private hire vehicle driver's licence can be suspended or revoked with immediate effect if the driver presents a risk to public safety based on the information available at that time and on the balance of probability.

Information was received in December 2024 from Surrey Police in relation to a Runnymede licensed driver. The seriousness of the allegations and the driver's past history were taken into account, which gave serious concern to the Driver's fit and proper status. The Licensing Authority had no power to suspend the licence for an interim period and considered it proportionate and reasonable to immediately revoke the Licence in the interests of the safety of the travelling public. The immediate revocation was agreed by Senior Managers and the Corporate Head of Legal and Governance to be proportionate to the seriousness of the allegations/intelligence, the past history/patterns of behaviour of the driver and breaches of policy.

The difference between suspension of a licence and its revocation was noted, that in general, a suspension of a licence was for a finite period in such cases as until, for example, a satisfactory medical certificate or certificate of insurance has been produced.

A revocation was a total loss of a licence and once revoked cannot be reinstated, other than through an appeal process to the Magistrates' Court.

Case law has defined that suspension/revocation cannot be used as a two-stage process and if it has been determined to take away a licence then it must either be a suspension for a limited period or a revocation. It cannot be a suspension followed by a revocation.

As per our Taxi Licensing Policy, in addition to criminal convictions, the Council will also take into account other factors when determining fit and proper assessments, such as demeanour, attitude, general character, non-criminal behaviour and Police or other relevant records, or information from a reliable source.

Additionally, the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022 imposes a duty on councils in England to record details on the national NR3S Register, of any refusal, revocation and/or suspension of a driver's licence. Hence, the driver concerned was added to the register.

The Act also imposes a duty on councils to search the register before making a decision on a person's application for, or for the renewal of, a driver's licence. This information sharing was an extra safeguard in the application process.

6. Changes to Local Government in Surrey

KD advised that Local government in Surrey was expected to change which would ultimately result in Runnymede Borough Council ceasing to exist as a Local Authority. Central government's plans were to replace all the local boroughs and districts by a much smaller number of new unitary authorities, providing all local government services in larger geographic areas. Therefore, in Surrey, the County Council's elections, which were due to take place in May 2025 would be suspended for 12 months to facilitate Local Government re-organisation.

This would mean changes across the board for the trade, depending on which local authorities grouped together to form the new unitary bodies and subject to central government approval. There would need to be one set of policies and procedures over a greater geographical area and an alteration to fees and charges. Drivers would be kept informed as and when the future was clearer.

7. AOB

JT sought feedback on electric vehicles, noting that Spelthorne planned to go all electric for new taxi licences in 2028, subject to the outcome of local government re-organisation.

In general, it was reported that electric vehicles didn't have an appropriate range and were still more expensive to buy and maintain with a lower re-sale value. Public charging points were expensive and often unavailable either because they were in use or not working for long periods of time. In addition, some public charging points made an additional charge for occupying the parking space whilst charging, which was a disincentive.

Some electric vehicles had reduced storage capacity for luggage and a poor choice for wheelchair accessibility, owing to accommodation of the battery. Repair costs to electric vehicles could also be prohibitive, and there was the added complication of using the air-conditioning and/or heating v preserving the battery life. Currently, there were 3 or 4 electric taxis in use in the Borough.

The merits of petrol v diesel v electric was discussed. Hydrogen fuel vehicles was potentially a future option.

KD agreed to review the soiling charge which it was reported didn't cover costs and had remained at £50 for a number of years.

The forum finished at 11:45 hours.