

Slough Borough Council

Report to:	Council
Date:	29 th January 2026
Subject:	Petition – " <i>Delay Slough's Diesel Vehicle Taxi Cut-off (1 Jan 2026) Support Drivers Now!</i> "
Chief Officer:	Tessa Lindfield, Director Public Health and Public Protection
Contact Officer:	Laura Robertson, Head of Public Protection
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	None

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the details of a Petition titled "***Delay Slough's Diesel Vehicle Taxi Cut-off (1 Jan 2026) Support Drivers Now!***" which has been received under the Council's Petitions Scheme.
- 1.2 The petition is before the Council this evening and received a total of 1,517 signatures, collected via an e-petition on the Council's website.
- 1.3 The Council is invited to review and agree its course of action in relation to the petition.

Recommendations:

Following the debate the Council is asked to:

- (i) Note the response set out by Officers within this report
- (ii) Note that the Licensing Committee on 11th February 2026 is considering a review report on the Vehicle Age policy.
- (iii) Consider whether to make any further recommendations to the Licensing Committee, in response to the petition.

Reasons

Article 17 of the Council's constitution contains the petition scheme. The Licensing Committee determined the original policy and has delegated authority to review and approve amendments to it.

Commissioner Review

This report is outside the scope for pre-publication commissioner review; please check the [Commissioners' instruction 5 to CLT to sign off papers](#) for further details

2. Report

- 2.1 This report advises the Council of a Petition –, "**Delay Slough's Diesel Vehicle Taxi Cut-off (1 Jan 2026) Support Drivers Now!**" which was received by the Council in December 2025.
- 2.2 The Council's Petition Scheme states that if a petition receives 1,500 or more valid signatures, the petition will be debated at a full Council meeting.
- 2.3 The Petition has surpassed the threshold of triggering a debate at full Council and contains 1,517 signatories, collected via an e-petition on the Council's website.
- 2.4 The Petition text reads as follows:

"We the undersigned petition the council to:

- 1. Delay the diesel vehicle cut-off (1 Jan 2026) until a full review which includes a robust consultation is completed*
- 2. set up as promised working group with drivers, operators, officers and councillors.*
- 3. report publicly on the use of grant funding and available support for diesel vehicle drivers*
- 4. review licensing fees, vehicle age limits and support mechanism to ensure fairness.*

Slough Council is planning to ban diesel vehicles for taxis from 1 Jan 2026, but the promised policy review and trade consultation has not happened. Drivers and operators are being asked to bear high costs and switch vehicles, without proper support.

Key concerns :

- * The October 2025 review was cancelled, so the impact on diesel vehicle drivers is unassessed*
- * no working group has been established, despite promises from councillors to include drivers and operators*
- * The Council received £370,035 in grant funding to support the transition to low-emission vehicles, but there is no clear update on how the money has helped diesel vehicle drivers*
- * Slough's diesel vehicle cut-off is stricter and more costly than neighbouring councils, putting livelihoods at risk*

Sign this petition to make sure Slough Council listens to drivers and operators, protects livelihoods, and implements a sustainable, fair policy."

3. Supporting Information for Debate

- 3.1 The Petition Organiser has been invited to the Council meeting to speak on the Petition (up to five minutes) and the Petition will then be discussed by Members of

the Council for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Mayor has discretion to extend this time taking account of the degree of public interest in the issue, the level of support given to the petition and the number of elected members wishing to express their views on the subject.

- 3.2 Following this discussion, the Council will need to decide what action to take with regard to the Petition.
- 3.3 The Scheme indicates that the Council's response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it but may include one or more of the following (for executive functions, these could be formal recommendations to Cabinet).
 - Taking the action requested in the Petition.
 - Considering the Petition at a Council Meeting.
 - Holding an Inquiry.
 - Commissioning relevant research.
 - Organising a public meeting.
 - Mounting a wider public consultation.
 - Meeting with the Petition Organiser or representatives of signatories.
 - Providing a written response outlining the Council's views on the subject.
 - Referring the issue to the Council's Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee **OR**
 - Referring the issue to the relevant Committee/Cabinet.
 - Consulting statutory partners and local service providers.
 - Instigating discussions with the voluntary and community sectors; and
 - Making representations to Commercial or other Interests.

Background Information

2023 Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy

- 3.4 The 2018 Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy stated that ALL vehicles granted new licenses AND renewals were to be Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) from 1 Jan 2025. At the time, this was in line with the Council's Low Emission Strategy (LES) 2018-2025.
- 3.5 In 2023 the Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy ('The Policy') was reviewed in the light of the impact of the pandemic on the industry. The review included a full consultation. A revised Policy was subsequently adopted, amending the stricter 2018 requirements.
- 3.6 The key changes in the new 2023 Policy were
- 3.6.1 Only NEW grant vehicle licences were affected by requirements on fuel type, not renewals.

3.6.2 The start date for implementation was moved. The requirement for new grant licences for non-diesel vehicles was moved to 1 January 2026 and for new grant licences on non-petrol/mild hybrid to 1 January 2027.

3.6.3 Diesel powered vehicles can remain licenced until they are 9 years old as long as they are in a road worthy condition.

Current Vehicle Fleet

3.7 Currently there are 370 standard vehicles in the fleet of which 123 are diesel vehicles. There are 24 diesel vehicles that will be 9 years old in 2026.

The vehicle fleet is constantly evolving and so direct comparison of the current fleet with previous years fleet is not possible because of the entry and exit of drivers and vehicles in and out of the fleet. However, we know there is an ongoing trend towards cleaner fuels in the fleet, as there is in the general population, and this is evidenced by the 80% of new grant vehicle licence applications that were for cleaner fuelled vehicles in 2025.

Air Quality in Slough

3.8 Vehicle emissions are a significant contributor towards nitrogen dioxide (“NO₂”) concentrations and a key contributor to particulate matter (“PM”) concentrations in the Borough. Both NO₂ and PM have significant health impacts for the residents of Slough.

3.9 Slough has 5 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) that are declared as such due to exceedances of the NO₂ national air quality objective level of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in each of these areas. The Council is required to reduce emissions at these locations and has committed to an aspiration to reverse the AQMA designation on all of these areas by 2030.

3.10 The Council is legally required to have an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) that sets out how it will try and improve air quality at these locations.

3.11 Of all the sources within our Local Authority control, diesel cars are the single biggest contributor to NO₂ across the borough (23.9%) and licenced vehicles contribute to 10% of the total NO₂ road vehicle emissions at Air Quality Management Area 4 (Slough Town Centre). ¹

3.12 The Licensing Committee recommended the AQAP in October 2024 and this was approved at Full Council in November 2024. This has 26 measures to improve air quality in Slough, and these are focused on the issues that the Council can impact upon, including active travel infrastructure improvements, low emission travel, and enhancing the EV charging network.

3.13 The AQAP includes, as one of the 26 measures, a programme to deliver the DEFRA funded taxi demonstration project, which SBC was awarded a grant (£370K) in 2021. This programme had an estimated start date of 2026 and a completion date set of 2028.

3.14 Improving air quality has a direct impact on the health of the town, particularly impacting children whose lungs are not fully developed, and people with heart

¹ Slough Air Quality Action plan 2024

and lung conditions. NO₂ emissions have a range of health harms but in particular cause damage respiratory systems, worsening asthma, increasing susceptibility to allergens and exacerbating symptoms of heart and lung disease.

Points Raised in the Petition

3.15 In direct response to the points raised in the petition.

1. Delay the diesel vehicle cut-off (1 Jan 2026) until a full review which includes a robust consultation is completed

The Council carried out a full review, including a consultation with stakeholders when the policy was reviewed and subsequently amended in 2023. At Licensing Committee in 2023, it was resolved that there should be a review in October 2025 but it did not commit to a further round of consultation. This review will be presented to Licensing Committee on 11th February 2026. The Chair of the Licensing Committee can amend the procedure rules to permit questions to be asked at committee, however advance notice should be provided of such a request. Any requester should contact democratic services for further information.

2. Set up as promised working group with drivers, operators, officers and councillors.

The Council did not promise to set up a working group however the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection has met with several trade representatives during December 2025 to hear their concerns. There will be an opportunity for further engagement with the trade over the plans for utilisation of the DEFRA grant in 2026 and this engagement will be arranged shortly.

3. Report publicly on the use of grant funding and available support for diesel vehicle drivers

A DEFRA grant was received by the Carbon & Sustainability team after they successfully bid for funds to support a project to assist the licenced vehicle trade in the transition to cleaner fuels. This project was given an initiation date of 2026.

The Council acknowledges that the grant was not immediately utilised. This was because of staff changes and resource limitations within the organisation at that time. However, the grant remains available and the review for consideration by the Licensing Committee in February 2026 will include a proposed delivery plan. The Licensing Committee meets in public, and papers are published on the council website.

4. Review licensing fees, vehicle age limits and support mechanism to ensure fairness.

The Council reviews all fees and charges annually. Fees for vehicle licensing are only permitted to be set at a level that meets cost recovery. The Local Authority is not allowed to add any additional uplifts and so the fee reflects the costs of delivering the licence.

The vehicle age limit at 9 years for a standard vehicle has been in place for over 20 years. The Council has a responsibility to ensure a vehicle fleet that is safe, roadworthy and of a good standard. The Council also has a responsibility to improve air quality to support the health and wellbeing of its residents.

The Licensing Team is available to respond to any queries from any licensed driver or operator and will always consider each application on a case-by-case basis and in line with relevant published policy which makes exceptions for wheelchair accessible vehicles and specialist vehicles such as limousines.

5. Slough Council is planning to ban diesel vehicles for taxis from 1 Jan 2026, but the promised policy review and trade consultation has not happened. Drivers and operators are being asked to bear high costs and switch vehicles, without proper support.

The Council is not banning diesel vehicles from 1 January 2026. The 2023 Policy phases out older diesel vehicles in favour of those running on cleaner fuels that help to contribute to improved air quality in Slough. The Policy only requires that any NEW vehicle licence being granted from 1 January 2026 will not be diesel-only propelled and from 1 January 2027 will not be petrol/mild hybrid propelled (in addition to the diesel removal).

This Policy is in accordance with Slough's Air Quality Action Plan 2024 - 2028, which was approved by Licensing Committee in October 2024 and the Corporate Plan 'A Fresh Start' 2023 – 2027, which commits to improving healthy life expectancy with a focus on children and young people.

The Council bid for a grant from DEFRA which they were successful in achieving and which was to support the outcome of using cleaner fuels.

Those driving diesel licenced vehicles today are able to continue to renew these licences until they wish to change vehicle or the vehicle reaches the age maximum of 9 years.

Drivers are not required to purchase a brand-new vehicle and can apply for a new licence on a vehicle that is up to 5 years old.

Drivers are already shifting over to cleaner fuels, 80% of new grant licence applications in 2025 were for non-diesel vehicles.

The Council continues to actively pursue its support to electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and significant numbers of new EV charging points are to be delivered across Slough.

Key concerns :

** The October 2025 review was cancelled, so the impact on diesel vehicle drivers is unassessed*

The October 2025 Licensing Committee was cancelled because it had no business to discuss. The review of the Vehicle Age policy was not cancelled, it started in the month of November 2025, and the findings will be brought to the next Licensing Committee in February 2026.

** No working group has been established, despite promises from councillors to include drivers and operators*

The Council did not promise a working group. The Council conducted a full consultation with stakeholders between August and October 2023. The Chair of the Licensing Committee can amend the procedure rules to permit questions to be asked at committee, however advance notice should be provided of such a request. Any requester should contact democratic services for further information.

**The Council received £370,035 in grant funding to support the transition to low-emission vehicles, but there is no clear update on how the money has helped diesel vehicle drivers*

The Council did receive this grant funding in 2021. A plan as to how this will be used to help drivers with the transition to cleaner vehicles will be detailed at the February Licensing Committee.

**Slough's diesel vehicle cut-off is stricter and more costly than neighbouring councils, putting livelihoods at risk*

Comparison with neighbouring boroughs indicates that SBC policy is in line with acceptable practice, for example Transport for London (TFL) has made significant strides towards London having only ULEV licenced private hire and hackney carriage vehicles. They have done this by only allowing new grant applications for ULEV vehicles since 1 Jan 2023.

Bracknell have the same age requirement of a new grant to a vehicle, but have additional criteria linked to milage of the vehicle.

Reading has a requirement that from 13 Feb 2026 that all new vehicles grant private hire licences must be less than 5 years old and ULEV compliant. From 1 October 2025 all hackney carriages new grants were required to be ULEV compliant. Reading demand a 12 monthly inspection on a vehicle over 10 years old and from 13 February 2026 the maximum age limit is being reduced to 15 year. From 13 Feb 2027 to 12 years and 10 years from 2028.

RBWM do not have any emission standards in their policy but do operate similar vehicle age requirements to Slough requiring a new grant licenced vehicle to be no more than 5 years old and a maximum age of 12 years.

More details of neighbouring boroughs licensing policies will be shared with the Licensing Committee.

An applicant is free to choose which Licensing Authority they apply to. The Licensing policy is in place to ensure that safe, roadworthy vehicles are on the road and that vehicles are encouraged towards cleaner fuels.

Each council creates local policy that is applicable to their own borough and its individual circumstances which is why there will inevitably be differences across neighbouring authorities. The Council endeavours to set corporate objectives that balance the needs of residents, businesses and our environment, alongside nationally set goals. The Council has a duty to have regard to the Health and Well-being Strategy of the Council and key corporate policies such as the Corporate Plan reflect this.

4. Implications of the Recommendation

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications to the Council relating to this report.

The planned utilisation of the DEFRA Air Quality Grant Fund received in 2021 of £370,035 will be presented in the report to Licensing Committee in February 2026.

5.0 Legal Implications

Slough Borough Council adopted a petition scheme in July 2010. This Petition meets the criteria listed in the Council's Petition Scheme.

Under the Council's published Petitions Scheme a Petition that contains 1,500 signatures triggers a debate at Council.

Functions relating to Licensing are non- executive matters.

The Government has issued guidance for licencing authorities on driver and vehicle licensing. This includes guidance on vehicle age limits and that policies should consider targeted requirements to meet policy objectives on emissions, safety rating and accessibility where these are particular issues in the local area. The guidance also highlights the need for cross council and trade working to ensure the taxi fleet contributes towards air quality and climate responsibilities, including tackling issues caused by fleet emissions.

This requires a longer-term strategy, and options to introduce schemes such as try before you buy and installation of electric vehicle charging points. The guidance emphasises that taxis operating in a predominantly urban environment can be a significant contributor to poor local air quality if not properly maintained and checked due to their higher usage. Whilst requiring higher EURO 6 emission standards can be a short term solution, the longer term solution requires the trade to end the sale and purchase of new petrol and diesel cars and transition to zero emission vehicles. Authorities should have long term plans set out in good time to allow appropriate planning and phasing of changes.

6.0 Risk Management Implications / Environmental implications

To recommend consideration of changes to this policy could have environmental implications on air quality. Changes to this policy could result in diesel vehicles being licensed for a further 9 years that would otherwise have been refused in favour of cleaner fuelled vehicles after 1 Jan 2026.

7.0 Equality implications

The Council undertook an equalities impact assessment with the policy change in 2023 and has recently completed an updated Equalities Impact Assessment as part of the policy review. This will be presented in the review to Licensing Committee in February 2026.

Background Papers

There are no background papers arising from this report.