

## Slough Borough Council

**Report To:** Licensing Committee

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Subject:** Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 - Review of Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy

**Chief Officer:** Tessa Lindfield, Director of Public Health and Public Protection

**Contact Officer:** Laura Robertson – Head of Public Protection  
Levine Whitham – Food & Safety & Licensing Manager  
Rachael Rumney – Principal Licensing Officer

**Ward(s):** All

**Exempt:** NO

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Current Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy 2023  
Appendix B – Air Quality Action Plan SBC 2024 – 2028  
Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment  
Appendix D – DEFRA Grant, Proposed Project Plan

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out to advise Committee of the findings of a review of the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy (the Vehicle Policy), which was undertaken in November 2025

#### Recommendations:

#### Committee is asked to:

- a) Consider the review contained in this report.
- b) Agree that no changes are made to the 2023 Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy (the Vehicle Policy) and continue its implementation.

#### Reason:

The 2018 Vehicle Policy was amended in October 2023 following a full and detailed review and consultation.

The 2023 Vehicle Policy sets out reasonable milestones to move the fleet to less polluting fuels in Slough.

This Vehicle policy balances the environmental impact of combustible engines and the requirements on the Council to put measures in place to address poor air quality.

The Vehicle policy recognises the impact of poor air quality on the health of Slough residents who suffer significant health inequalities.

The 2023 revisions lessened the impact of the original policy on the trade. The support to the trade to help with the transition choices has been delayed in its implementation, however EV infrastructure continues to be implemented across Slough and a plan to deliver the DEFRA grant by the Carbon & Sustainability team is attached to this report and has Director approval.

The 2023 Vehicle Policy is coherent with the Council's corporate plan, 'A Fresh Start', which commits to improving healthy life expectancy with a focus on children and young people

The Licensing Committee recommended the 2024 - 2028 AQAP to full Council at its meeting 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024, stating that they were supportive in principle of further measures to improve air quality as it was a significant public health issue. The Air Quality Action Plan focus is on reducing pollution from traffic and specifically refers to the 2023 Vehicle Policy as a component of the Plan.

## **Commissioner Review**

Commissioners have received the report and comments, if any, will be reported to the meeting.

## **2. Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

- 2.1. The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 allows the Local Authority to set vehicle standards of the granting of hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licences.

## **Options**

- Option 1 - No changes are made to the 2023 Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy (the Vehicle Policy) and continue its implementation. This option contributes to achieving the Council's strategic aims and the Government's guidance on vehicle fleet. In particular the effect of this policy is contributing to improvements in

air quality and rolling back the changes may reverse this change and 80% of new vehicle licence applications are for non-diesel vehicles demonstrating the shift that the trade have made in response to the policy. **(Recommended)**

Option 2 - That the phasing out of diesel and petrol/mild hybrid vehicles from the licenced fleet is paused and a full consultation is repeated, with a view to bringing this back to Committee to consider at a future Licensing Committee meeting. This option is not recommended, as the policy has been in place for several years and was introduced following a full consultation exercise, many vehicle owners have moved to less polluting vehicles having been given adequate notice of the phasing of the policy changes and this option will hinder the Council's ability to meet its environmental standards as set out in its transport, air quality and other environmental policies. **(Not recommended)**.

## **Background**

- 2.2. The 2018 Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy was reviewed in October 2023 following the impact of Covid on the industry. A four-week public consultation was carried out, which proposed two options for amending the 2018 policy.
- 2.3. The 2018 policy aimed to transition all the licensed fleet (except for wheelchairs accessible vehicles), to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) by 31 December 2025. Only vehicles with emissions of less than 75g of CO<sub>2</sub>/km could be licensed from 1 January 2025 onwards.
- 2.4. The ULEV requirement was to be applied to both grant and renewal applications. Any licensed vehicle that did not meet the ULEV standard would have the renewal application refused from 1 January 2025.
- 2.5. Following the review and consultation in 2023, proposals were put forward to relax the 2018 policy. At Licensing Committee October 2023, Vehicle policy proposals were resolved that from 1 January 2026 new taxi grant applications must be non-diesel fuelled, and from 1 January 2027 new taxi grant applications must be an alternative to both diesel and petrol/mild hybrid.
- 2.6. The 2023 Vehicle policy maintained the requirement that diesel, petrol and mild hybrid vehicles can be renewed each year until they are 9 years old (standard vehicle) and a new vehicle being licensed can be up to 5 years old.
- 2.7. In October 2023 the Licensing Committee approved the proposed amendments to the Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy.

## **Air Quality and Health**

- 2.8. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2026-2036) (a statutory requirement of Slough Borough Council's Health and Wellbeing Board) describes a shared ambition for a healthy, flourishing Slough where children and young people will have a good foundation of life, adults will find it easier to live well and older adults will stay well for longer. Air pollution affects the ability for children to live well as it is associated with respiratory conditions such as asthma in childhood and pulmonary fibrosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in adulthood. When air quality is poor, there are increased hospital admissions for cardiovascular and respiratory disease.
- 2.9. Air pollution is also associated with cognitive decline in older adults. All of this contributes to the low life expectancy we see in Slough and the low healthy life expectancy – men and women spend about one quarter of their lives living in poor health. The fraction of mortality associated with particulate air pollution in 2023 in Slough was 5.8%. Creating healthy places is a key part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and air quality is specifically mentioned as a driver of healthy places.

## **Air Quality Action plan**

- 2.10. In 2024, the Slough Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028 was developed. Slough Borough Council continually monitor air quality as part of their statutory local air quality management duties, required under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 (amended 2021). Areas where national air quality objectives will not be achieved must be declared as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). Slough currently has five AQMAs which were declared in 2005, 2011 and 2018, due to exceedances of the air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide ( $40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). Road traffic vehicle emissions contribute to approximately half of total nitrogen dioxide emissions within Slough's AQMAs.
- 2.11. Once an AQMA has been declared, the Local Authority is required to develop an Air Quality Action Plan, setting out measures to improve air quality within the specified area in order to meet air quality objectives and revoke the AQMA, and dates by which they will be carried out. Action plans are valid for a period of five years before they need to be reviewed and refreshed. The actions within Slough's Air Quality Action Plan focus on three key topic areas:
- Environment: focusing on emission management and reduction of emissions at the source
  - Transport: focusing on traffic management and infrastructure to support modal shift
  - Health Education & Awareness: focusing on improving the air quality knowledge base across the borough.

- 2.12. Progress on the delivery of the action plan is reported each year via the Annual Status Report, submitted to Defra every June. The report outlines the current air quality trends across the borough, and the status of actions outlined within the action plan. The most recent report (ASR 2025) presents data collected during the previous calendar year (2024) and has demonstrated that concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in Slough during 2024 were the lowest on record, indicating therefore that measures introduced to date are having a positive influence on pollution concentrations.
- 2.13. The Slough Air Quality Action Plan was approved by Licensing Committee in October 2024 and by Full Council in November 2024.

### **DEFRA grant**

- 2.14. The Council is in receipt of £370,035 of DEFRA grant funding received in 2021, to run a project supporting the licenced vehicle trade in transitioning to cleaner vehicles. Delivery of this project directly supports the aims of the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028.

### **Project Delivery 2026/27**

The project consists of three main components, including a 'try before you buy' electric vehicle loan scheme, a taxi driver charging cost support scheme, and two awareness campaigns.

- The 'try before you buy' scheme will allow up to 50 drivers to experience driving an electric taxi in real-world conditions for between 30-90 days, aiming to reduce uncertainty, increase confidence and provide practical experience of driving an electric vehicle.
- The taxi driver charging cost support scheme is designed to reduce the ongoing cost of electric vehicle charging for licensed taxi drivers, with a particular focus on drivers without access to private off-street parking.
- Promotion to support uptake of the scheme will be undertaken via the two awareness campaigns, focusing on both the use of the electric vehicles and use of charging infrastructure.

Due to capacity and resource constraints in 2021, there has been significant delay in delivery of this project, however it is anticipated that the scheme will commence in 2026. The detailed project plan is attached at Appendix D.

## Fleet Analysis

2.15. In November 2025, the current fleet of licensed vehicles was reviewed along with an analysis of vehicle grant applications. A summary of the review is as follows.

### Vehicle grant applications in 2025

- Up to November 2025, there was a total of 69 vehicle grant applications since 1 Jan 2025.  
80% of grant applications were for hybrid vehicles

### Vehicle Fleet Analysis November 2025

Number of Vehicles	Type	
370	'Standard' vehicles licensed (excluding wheelchair accessible vehicles)	
51	Wheelchair accessible vehicles	
421	Total licensed private hire and hackney carriage vehicles	
		% of Standard Fleet
123	Diesel vehicles licensed on 'standard' fleet	33%.
213	Hybrid vehicles licensed on 'standard' fleet	58%.
13	Electric vehicles licensed on 'standard' fleet	3.5%.
18	Petrol vehicles licensed on 'standard' fleet	5%.
3	Electric/diesel hybrid	0.80%

NOTE – The phasing out of diesel and petrol does not apply to wheelchair accessible vehicles

2.16. The fleet review has identified 24 licensed diesel vehicles that will be over 9 years of age when their 2026 vehicle licence renewal is due.

2.17. From the fleet review and vehicle grant application analysis, it can be concluded that the current vehicle policy is having a positive impact, and licence holders are actively choosing to licence cleaner, hybrid vehicles.

### Emission controls and improving Health

2.18. The Children's Health in London and Luton (CHILL) is a large-scale study that aims to find out whether reducing air pollution from traffic is improving children's lung growth and respiratory health. This is a large-scale study

that will seek to provide significant evidence of the health impact on Children. Research reports on the impact of reducing emissions through ULEZ schemes have already demonstrated significant reductions in pollutants from vehicle emissions. The impact of this policy in London has already shown a marked change in the number of children using ‘active travel’ instead of relying on cars for home to school journeys.

### Benchmarking with other authorities

2.19. Benchmarking with other councils is challenging as Local Authorities near Slough have a variety of differing features. These include differing urban/rural mix, and variations in air quality, health inequalities and children’s health. Based on the urban nature of Slough and its current air quality plan, the most appropriate comparator is neighbouring London boroughs.

2.20. The table below demonstrates the differences as would be expected across other Local Authorities. What can be seen is that Transport for London, which covers all London boroughs has had zero emission requirements since 2018. Reading are set to move Private Hire Vehicles new grants over to ULEV from 13 Feb 2026 with ULEV Hackney carriage new grants in place since October 2025.

### Benchmarking Summary

Licensing Authority	When will you no longer be able to get a new diesel licenced?	When will this apply to petrol/mild hybrids as well?	Maximum age of (standard) vehicle to renew*	Maximum Age of new vehicle to be licensed.
SBC	1 Jan 2026	1 Jan 2027	9 years 12 years (ULEV)	5 years
TFL (Hillingdon, Hounslow etc)	1 Jan 2018 (Zero emission capable)	1 Jan 2018 (Zero emission capable)	12 years (Hackney) 10 years (PHV)	
Reading (Private Hire)	13 Feb 2026	13 Feb 2026	2026 - 15 years 2027 – 12 years 2028 – 10 years	5 years

(Hackney)	1 Oct 2025 (min ULEV)  1 Oct 2028 (ALL vehicles min LEVC)	1 Oct 2025 (min ULEV)  1 Oct 2028 (ALL vehicles min LEVC)	7 years  15 years	7 years
Bracknell	All vehicles must meet the Euro 5 or Euro 6 emissions standards if they are being submitted for grant or renewal of a licence.	All vehicles must meet the Euro 5 or Euro 6 emissions standards if they are being submitted for grant or renewal of a licence.	If over 5 years to be grant or renewal and more than 25K inspected every 4 months.	If under 5 years  less than 25K miles and then inspected every 6 months
RBWM	No standards cited	No standards cited	12 years	5 years
Buckinghamshire	Vehicles first registered since September 2015 must meet or exceed Euro 6 emission standards. All newly licensed vehicles will therefore meet Euro 6 standards.		10 years*  15 years (ULEV)	5 years  (starting later in 2026)

\*some exemptions apply

### 3. Implications of the recommendation

#### 3.1. Financial implications

3.1.1. This report sets out the planned utilisation of the ring-fenced DEFRA Air Quality Grant Fund received in 2021 of £370,035. If an alternative option is chosen, this may incur costs to the Council and result in the reimbursing the grant funding. Delivery of this project directly supports the aims of the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028.

#### 3.2. Legal implications

3.2.1. Part II of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, allows the Local Authority to set vehicle standards as it considers reasonably necessary for the granting of private hire and hackney carriage vehicle licences.

3.2.2. Under Part 3.4 (Responsibility for Council Functions) of the Council's Constitution, the Licensing Committee is responsible for;

Determining all functions not reserved to Full Council in connection with;

- Private hire and hackney carriage, including where individuals have been convicted of offences there is other cause for concern about suitability or Officers consider it appropriate to refer the matter to the committee.
- Setting conditions, fares and fees and charges for private hire and hackney carriage licensing.

3.2.3. Department of Transport, Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England 2023 Section 8.6 states;

*'The UK is committed to a 2050 net zero target. This puts the UK on track to end our contribution to climate change, becoming one of the first major economies to legislate for net zero emissions. On transport, government is phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, from 2035 all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe'.*

*'Where clean air zones are introduced, authorities will already be working to address local environmental considerations under the Clean Air Zones Framework. More widely, licensing authorities, in discussion with those responsible for environmental health issues, will wish to consider how its vehicle licensing policies can and should support any environmental policies adopted by the local authority. **This will be particularly important in designated air quality management areas or low/ultra-low emission zones**'.*

*'Licensing teams should work with council colleagues with air quality and climate responsibilities to ensure taxi and private hire vehicle fleets play their part in work to tackle local emissions. Leading areas cite large-scale change in these fleets needs a longer-term strategy, with a coordinated approach across council teams and local trades, that considers licencing requirements, other supportive policies (for example, try-before-you-buy scheme), and, in the context of moving to a fully zero emission vehicle fleet, a strategy for supporting the installation of electric vehicle charge points'.*

*'Taxis and private hire vehicles that operate predominantly in urban areas can be significant contributors to poor local air quality, if not properly maintained and regularly checked, due to their higher usage'.*

*'Licensing authorities should carefully and thoroughly assess the impact of vehicle emission requirements to enable the sector to plan for the future. The short-term objective should be to mitigate the harm from internal combustion engines through the setting of high EURO emission standards for example, EURO 6 but, in the long-term, the trade will need to be fully prepared for the end of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and the need*

*to transition to zero emission vehicles. Licensing authorities should set out their own long-term plan in good time’.*

*‘In response to local air quality concerns, many licensing authorities are considering how to support the use of ultra-low or zero emission vehicles given the growing range of vehicles available’.*

### **3.3. Risk Implications**

- 3.3.1. At present, Government will be phasing out vehicles relying on combustion engines in 4 years’ time. There will be an end to the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 in the UK. All new cars and vans sold will need to be 100% zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) by 2035.
- 3.3.2. Therefore this Vehicle policy is in line with National and local commitments to cleaner energy, improving air quality and health of Slough residents.
- 3.3.3. This vehicle policy will only be reviewed as and when necessary to ensure our policies align with key priorities.

### **3.4. Environmental Implications**

- 3.4.1. Consideration has been given to environmental implications. Slough Borough Council has set a stretch target of borough-wide carbon neutrality by 2030, with an objective target of 2040. A revised Low Emission Strategy is emerging that will continue to work towards this strategic aim. The Air Quality Action Plan directly supports the priorities of the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027.
- 3.4.2. Maintaining this Vehicle policy will support the aims of the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028, which was developed to fulfil duties required under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 (amended 2021) and proposed by Licensing Committee to Full Council in November 2024.
- 3.4.3. The Air Quality Action Plan has two key aims:
  - Achieve a boroughwide NO<sub>2</sub> target concentration of <35µg/m<sup>3</sup> by 2028
  - Revoke all of Slough Borough Council’s declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) by 2030
- 3.4.4. The action plan outlines 26 measures across all areas that the Council can influence that will contribute towards improving air quality in Slough. One of those areas is road vehicle emissions which is responsible for 45% of emissions on average across the borough. Within each of Slough’s AQMAs, diesel vehicles contribute towards over half of total vehicle emissions.
- 3.4.5. The action plan outlines the health impacts associated with poor air quality and evidence presented within the action plan demonstrates that delivery

of the action plan's actions will result in air quality improvements, which will in turn result in improved health outcomes for those who live, work and visit Slough.

### **3.5. Equality Implications**

3.5.1. We have conducted an Equalities Impact Assessment on this policy which is attached at Appendix C. Key findings of the EQIA are:

Pollution is linked to over 700 health conditions affecting every system in the body. It affects the health of pregnant women and unborn babies, children and adults, and those living in areas of deprivation experience the worst outcomes. In London an inquest into the death of Ella Kissi-Debrah found that air pollution was the cause of her death and this tragic case led to the Mayor of London pursuing ULEZ and other traffic management plans focused on improving air quality.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Air Quality Guidelines state that levels of pollutants in the air must stay below the following:

- <math>5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3</math> for  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  per year
- <math>15 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3</math> for  $\text{PM}_{10}$  per year
- <math>10 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3</math> for  $\text{NO}_2$  per year (areas in Slough breach this level)

3.5.2. In Slough, the fraction of mortality associated with particulate air pollution in 2023 was 5.8%. This figure has been on a downward trend since 2018 but has always remained higher than England.

3.5.3. When protected characteristics are considered, there could be a negative impact of this policy on older drivers who may not benefit financially from the cost of a hybrid or electric vehicle, however younger drivers may benefit in the longer term from reduced fuel costs.

3.5.4. Older drivers who are also residents of Slough will benefit from improved air quality which impacts more greatly on older people and young children.

3.5.5. Pregnant women and children will positively benefit from this policy with improved air quality health benefits for pregnant women and infants.

3.5.6. Ethnicity data for drivers of the fleet is not held.

### **3.6. Procurement implications**

3.6.1. There are no procurement implications to the Council.

## **4. Background Papers**

[Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)