

Consultation survey on Sevenoaks District Council draft Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy

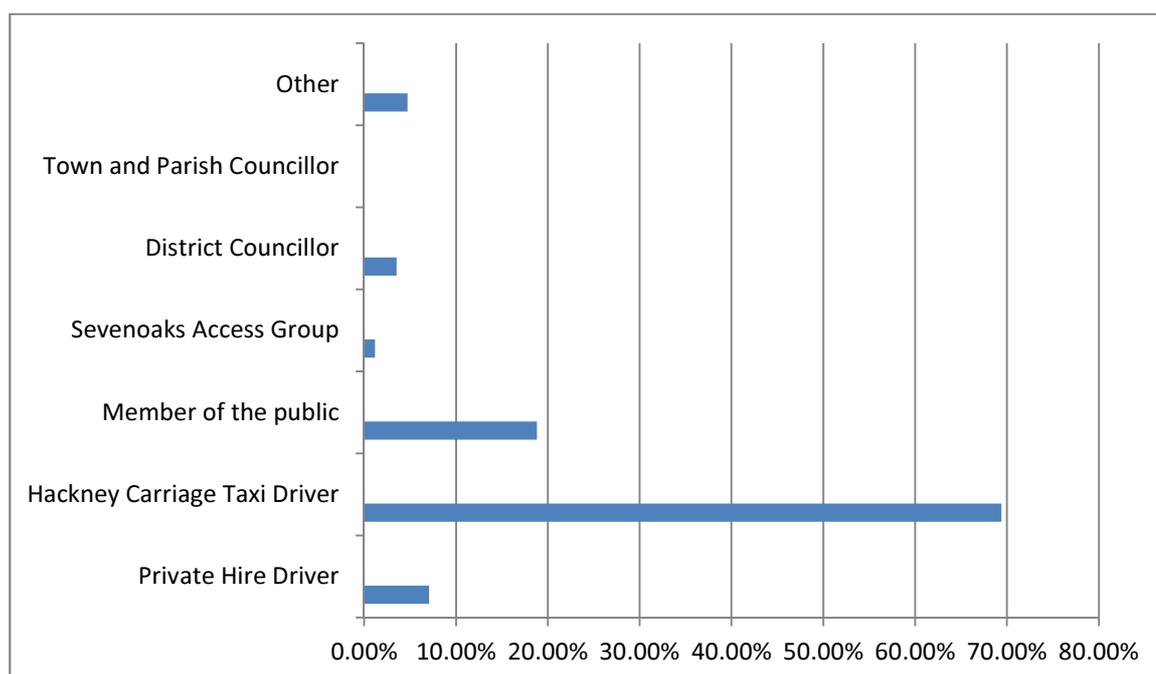
Results

1. The survey ran from 12th October to 11th December 2015, and was available both online and in hard copy.

2. Most people submitted responses online; a total of 4 e-mails were received from individuals offering comments on the policy.

3. Profile of respondents:

- 92 people responded as individuals
- 3 were representing another group, two of which were identified as follows: local Sevenoaks residents (although no specific group was named), and the National Taxi Association
- 62 gave licence badge numbers

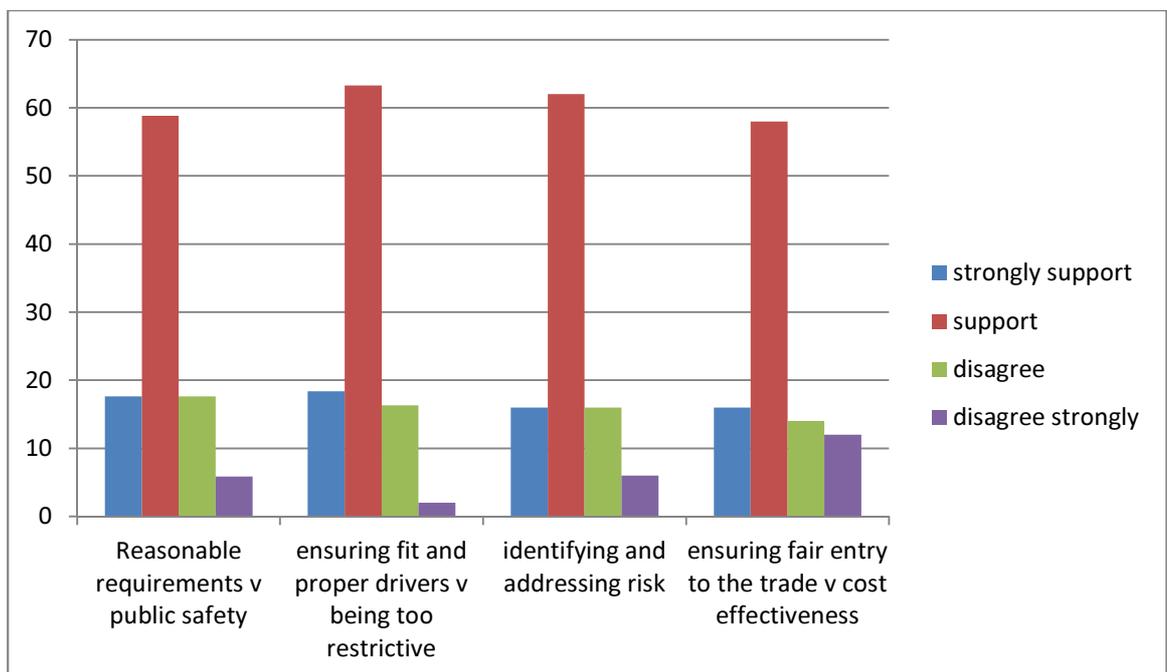


Other categories of respondents identified themselves as: Beeline Taxis Sevenoaks Director, an ex-taxi driver, two operators.

4. The first part of the survey requested views as to whether we had achieved the right balance in the policy between a range of requirements as identified below:

- Making reasonable requirements from drivers and ensuring public safety
- Ensuring fit and proper drivers while not being too restrictive
- Identifying and addressing risk
- Ensuring the balance between fair entry to the trade and cost effectiveness

52 responses were received on this section:



5. We asked for views on the levels of support for the voluntary dress code and on training on disability and safeguarding



37 respondents strongly supported/supported voluntary training on disability and safeguarding; 14 did not



31 respondents strongly supported/supported a voluntary dress code, 19 did not

Additional comments on these questions included the following:

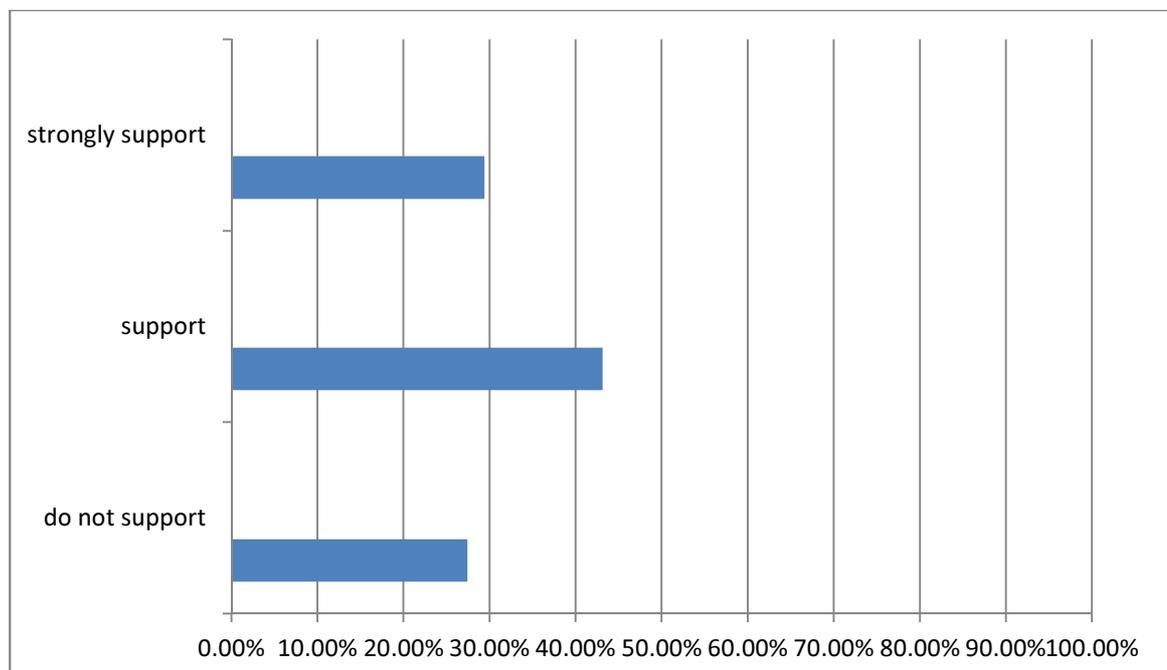
“If you’re not aware of how to deal with persons who suffer disability, and are unaware of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in my opinion you should not be in the trade. It is not something that should have a retrospective remedy”

“As previously stated at the meeting, I am not sure a “voluntary” dress code will work? There either needs to be a dress code or not, voluntary is not enforceable and can never be challenged, after all it’s voluntary!”

“Over recent years, standards in both have fallen. I believe there should be a minimum stated standard of dress code, i.e. smart casual, and a minimum level of knowledge and ability to be able to offer a decent service for all clients, able bodied or otherwise”.

“Do not really feel this applies to the taxi trade, as that policy would be primarily to safeguard vulnerable adults from neglect and abuse, which I believe would be very unlikely”.

6. We asked for respondents to indicate their overall level of support for the policy: (52 responses)



72.55% of respondents either strongly supported or supported the policy; 29.41% did not

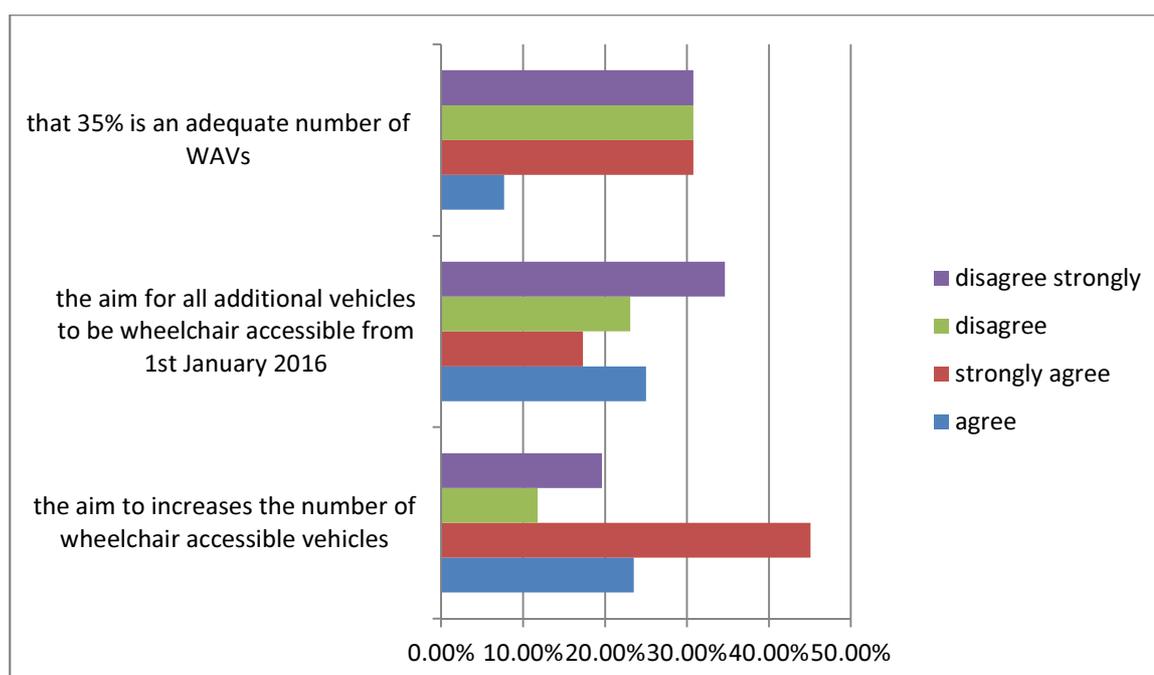
Additional comments on the policy included the following:

“The proposed grandfather rights seem to be a commitment to failure. The facts of life in the UK are that increasing numbers of people are disabled and need to travel; public sector policies pertaining to provision of Hackney Carriage licences need to reflect the changing needs of the population. Implementation of the grandfather rights as proposed will increase the time it will take to reach the 35% by four or five fold. I also question the legality of the proposed grandfather rights under the Equality Act; this Act places an onus on service providers to the public to pro-actively meet the needs of the disabled; if the taxi drivers insist on grandfather rights they will be contravening this Act”.

“I think that it would be better to gradually phase the ideas in, for new drivers only, it will eventually cover 100 percent of drivers. Your proposal gives no way of proportional distribution of taxis within the Sevenoaks area, i.e. there could be 8 wheelchair taxis in Sevenoaks, and only 1 in Swanley, or vice versa. It also doesn’t consider that there may be lots of wheelchair cabs available in the daytime, but not at night, or more available in the week and not weekends”.

7. We asked for responses on our proposal to aim for 35% of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs).

52 responses were received for this question



There were **27 additional comments** on this section, some of which are included below. Other comments focused on the perceived lack of passengers with disabilities in the district (therefore suggesting the need was not there for more WAVs), and that a target of 35% WAVs was disproportionate.

“I work for Beeline taxis and the number of requests for wheelchair accessible vehicles is minimal. Speaking to a number of customers I take, the main demand is for saloon cars, as many of them are elderly and are unable to get into any vehicles that are higher. Another reason we don't have the calls is that Dial a Ride charge 60p per mile for wheelchair users to travel. I recently picked a customer up who uses Dial a Ride to go to Blackheath (has fold down wheelchair) and pays £22 for a return trip. So I don't believe there will ever be the work to cover”.

“Obviously, we have to have more WAV's. However, as a company that complete around 600 jobs each and every day, the amount of phone calls we get is less than 1% of the total jobs. In fact, the bulk of our work requires saloon cars for taking elderly and disabled people. These passengers are unable to get in to a vehicle that is any higher than a saloon so we feel that the percentage is excessive. The problem with making all hackney carriages WAV's from 1st September 2016 is that many drivers will either try to change their vehicle before this date or swap their licences to private hire”.

“Any such restriction should be limited to companies only. The law may limit new independent drivers who cannot afford to invest in such a vehicle. My proposal would be any company who has 4 or more vehicles operating, should have at least 1 WAV (i.e. 25%)”.

“The need for accessible hackney carriages is obvious as not a single hackney carriage having a Station Licence is accessible. This situation is clearly untenable and potentially is in violation of the Disability Discrimination Act”

“I agree with the aim to increase the (number of) WAVs, but believe it should be optional. To promote this the council should provide incentives such as lower MOTs for WAV. I disagree to the plans to enforce new licensees to purchase WAV as the costs associated with being able to trade is at a high and WAV are quite pricy then ordinary cars. The rank is very crowded at present and larger vehicle with WAV will make it quite difficult to find space at the station”.

6. We asked respondents to choose three options from a list provided by the council and the trade for increasing the number of WAVs in the district:

Answer Choices (47 responses in total)	Responses
The offer from South East Rail: if a taxi driver already has a permit at the station and they upgrade their vehicle to be wheelchair accessible, they would get a Meteor permit free for a year.	42.55% 20
From 1st January 2016 all additional hackney carriage licenses must be wheelchair accessible. That is those that require the issue of a new Hackney Carriage plate number. (This does not apply to replacement vehicles, change of ownership of vehicles or vehicles that are replacing damaged vehicles).	31.91% 15
From 1st January 2018 all vehicles that reach the end of the life with respect to being eligible for licensing as a licensed vehicle (i.e. it is 10 years since the date of its first registration) must be replaced by a wheelchair accessible vehicle. (This does not apply to change of ownership of vehicles or vehicles that are replacing damaged vehicles or a total loss)	25.53% 12
As from 1st September 2016 all new taxi drivers entering into the industry will need to purchase a wheelchair accessible vehicle if they wish to operate as an owner driver.	38.30% 18
All existing plates before 1st December 2015 should be exempt from wheelchair accessible obligations under Grandfather rights. This will allow the Council to monitor all new drivers/vehicles coming into the industry.	34.04% 16
Owners of Hackney Carriage vehicles that are subject to their plates being renewed should be allowed to choose the vehicle they wish to work with (i.e. car or wheelchair accessible vehicles) under Grandfather rights.	42.55% 20
The change of car ownership from Private Hire driver to a driver for a Hackney Carriage vehicle should be allowed after 1st September 2016. Once a driver has lost his entitlement to the Grandfather rights s/he will be classed as a new driver entering into the industry and subject to purchase a purpose built vehicle. Once the vehicle has finished its life span of 10 years the plate is subject to renewal to a wheelchair accessible vehicle.	12.77% 6
All Hackney Carriage plates purchased before 1st September 2016 will be allowed under Grandfather rights to purchase a vehicle of their choice, either a saloon car or wheelchair accessible vehicle.	40.43% 19

Additional comments from respondents for these choices:

“The proposed grandfather rights will scupper any attempt to increase the number of WAV - these provisions MUST be removed”.

“None of the above scenarios will deliver the required 35 percent of accessible hackney carriages. South Eastern Trains should be encouraged to allow vehicles without a Station Licence to have one if they are accessible All new vehicles coming in the fleet as Hackney Carriages should be accessible This would need to include vehicles being replaced due to age replacement after accident and replacement after sale of one car with another Unless this becomes policy the Council will never achieve their target as so called grandfather rights will not make anyone replace a non accessible vehicle with an accessible one”.

“The permit offer would encourage drivers to purchase a WAV and we feel this is a good way to do it. Another idea could be that any driver that doesn't have a permit could have a permit for a year for free or be able to purchase a permit. -The second choice would make sure that the required percentage is reached. However, this could discourage new drivers in to the area. -We feel that drivers should have the chance to choose which vehicle they use for work”.

“The best possible way of providing and funding a dynamic and 24 hour wheelchair service from the taxi trade is not from the drivers but from the companies that operate in the area. Any firm of more than five cars should include a wheelchair taxi in their fleet and maybe one in ten on larger fleets, this would result Beeline putting right now 5 wheelchair taxis on our the Sevenoaks ranks 24 hours a day. Also to conform with public transport interlocking for customers journeys I would hope Sevenoaks Council could pressure the Railway companies to prioritise new wheelchair taxis for station permits”.

“Since the station was remodelled there is a major problem for wheelchairs on the corner by the cash machines in that it is not wide enough to get a wheelchair safely around this corner on the pavement. The only alternative is to go on the road which brings into itself more hazards i.e. traffic, the incline and loosing control going down hill. The other alternative is to use the lift (if it's working) and then have to push your self up hill to get to the taxi stand, No mean feat given the incline.”

As you state their are only a few WAV's in Sevenoaks which I think can be overcome by getting new drivers to get WAV's or getting the firms to supply

one or two more eac; company vehicles (Beeline, Victor, Dave's Taxis) have all bought people carriers in recent years so why not WAV's, these are the first numbers dialled to pre-book cabs”.

7. Equalities Monitoring:

Male: 40
 Female: 4
 Prefer not to say: 3

Number of respondents identifying as disabled: 3
 No disability: 45

Age:

18 - 24	2.13%
	1
25 - 34	17.02%
	8
35 - 44	23.40%
	11
45 - 54	21.28%
	10
55 - 64	27.66%
	13
65+	6.38%
	3
Prefer not to say	2.13%
	1