

# MEMBER'S WRITTEN QUESTION



Member submitting the question: Councillor Mrs Terri Beer

Date received: 15 November 2025

To the Cabinet Member for: [sally.haydon@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:sally.haydon@plymouth.gov.uk)

Question: A FOI request was made recently to Devon and Cornwall Police concerning offences committed of a sexual nature by Taxi drivers. The results are shocking. Do we vet taxi drivers backgrounds to ensure convictions are flagged and the nature of crimes? How behind if at all are the council with this? When it comes to public safety are the taxis in our City safe for vulnerable people to travel in? What measures are in place to ensure Plymouth Taxi drivers meet the standards the public expect and do we have issues like this brought before the licencing committee so that Licences can be revoked?

Answer:

The FOI results have not been made available to officers so I am unable to comment on the numbers, however I would be grateful to receive a copy of the information for consideration.

***Do we vet taxi drivers backgrounds to ensure convictions are flagged and the nature of crimes?***

Taxi and private hire licensing is a function of the Council and licences are required for any driver, vehicle proprietor and operator to work within the taxi licensing trade within Plymouth. The Council have a policy available on line that sets out the expectations and what checks are made to protect public safety. [Hackney Carriage and private hire licensing policy | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](#). The Department for Transport Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards [Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards - GOV.UK](#) were considered in the writing and implementation of this policy along with [Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance for licensing authorities in England](#).

**1.a**

This policy sets out the requirements to ensure that a person can be considered a 'fit and proper' person to hold a drivers licence and a specific part of this are checks on the applicants history of convictions and cautions, as well as other checks such as relevant skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications, spoken and written English, medical fitness, motoring endorsements, an understanding of local byelaws and conditions of licence, enhanced training requirements, the [Code of Good Conduct](#) and any other information thought to be relevant.

If a person is then licenced, regular and routine checks are required, including a 6 monthly submission of an updated enhanced DBS that checks for any new information. There is a specific guidance note [Guidance on Relevance of Convictions and Conduct](#) which should be read in conjunction with the Policy and sets out guidance as to how the Council considers the relevance of a range of different offences.

- 1.a Additional checks are carried out on new applicants against the National Anti-Fraud Network (NR3) Register to determine if an applicant has been refused or revoked a licence by another Local Authority. This register is used by licensing authorities to share information about drivers to mitigate the risk of non-disclosure of relevant information by applicants. If notification of a refused or revoked licence is disclosed, the relevant Council will be contacted to establish when the licence was refused, suspended or revoked and the reasons why. Any information that is disclosed will be taken into account in determining the applicant's fitness to be licensed.

The Council also keep up to date with Department of Transport statutory vehicle standards.

***How behind if at all are the council with this?***

The Council are not behind with these checks and any licenced driver who has not submitted the required information on time would be reminded to do so, and any subsequent failure to provide the documentation would mean a referral to Taxi Licensing Committee, for consideration of whether the applicant continues to be a fit and proper person. The Taxi committee can take various enforcement actions as highlighted in the policy and guidance on relevant convictions, which could include suspension or revocation of the driver until satisfactory provision of an up to date and acceptable DBS.

***When it comes to public safety are the taxis in our City safe for vulnerable people to travel in?***

The Council cannot grant a driver's licence unless they are satisfied that the applicant is a "fit and proper person" to hold a hackney carriage or private hire driver's licence. Once a licence has been granted, there is a continuing requirement that the driver remains a fit and proper person, and if they fall below the required standard, the licence can be suspended or revoked.

To be a "fit and proper" person means that they must be "safe and suitable" to drive a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle. The overriding consideration for the Council is to protect the public. The licensing regime is intended, among other things, to ensure so far as is possible that those licensed to drive vehicles are safe and suitable persons to do so.

When reviewing a licence at Taxi Licensing Committee, the Committee must apply the Button Test. This is as follows: "...Would you (as a member of the Licensing Board or other person charged with the ability to grant a hackney carriage/private hire driver's licence) allow your daughter or son, granddaughter or grandson, spouse, mother or father, or any other person you care for or any vulnerable person you know, to get into a vehicle with this person alone" (Paragraph 10.21 Button on Taxis – Licensing Law and Practice; Fourth Edition; Ed Bloomsbury Professional). If the answer to this question is an unqualified yes, then a licence should normally be approved. If there are any doubts in the minds of those making the decision, then the licence must be refused, suspended or revoked. It is the responsibility of the applicant or existing driver to satisfy the Council they are a 'fit and proper' person.

***What measures are in place to ensure Plymouth Taxi drivers meet the standards the public expect and do we have issues like this brought before the licencing committee so that Licences can be revoked?***

The Council require checks to be made on application, and any subsequent application to renew of a licence. In addition as mentioned, 6 monthly checks are made of a drivers DBS record to see if any circumstances have changed.

The Council respond to and investigate complaints made to it about any licence holder, and issues can be reported online. [Taxi complaints and compliments | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](#). The Council also follow the Department of Transport statutory guidance in how information is shared or received by other agencies in relation to safeguarding or considering any other issues brought to its attention about anyone with a taxi licence.

The Council have a scheme of delegation in relation to decision making. Whilst officers can make some decisions about licensing applications, the policy and the convictions guidance mentioned above sets out how enforcement actions are carried out. Any suspension or revocation of a licence is considered by Taxi Committee, and officers present reports of their investigations to Committee for a decision to be made. Information about Taxi Committees and delegations can be found on the following link. [Regulatory Committees | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](#)

Signed:

Date: 21 November 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hayden'.