

FAQ's - TAXI LICENCING – CCTV REPLACEMENT

1. Why is CCTV still needed in Taxis?

We want to protect all our licenced drivers, the travelling public and deter and detect crime where possible. We consider that we cannot reasonably achieve this without CCTV being operational when the vehicle is being used in a licensed capacity.

We have had a significant number of incidents involving the safety of drivers and the public. It is not possible to predict with any certainty when a serious incident may occur and therefore we consider CCTV is essential for the effective licensing of taxis in Warrington.

We have set out further information in our Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) on what our responsibilities are and why it is necessary in the interests of the public.

2. What is national policy?

The Task and Finish Group on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing made a series of recommendations including recommendation 17, which states that in the interests of passenger safety all licensed vehicles must be fitted with CCTV (visual and audio) subject to strict data protection measures. Licensing authorities must use their existing power to mandate this ahead of inclusion in national minimum standards.

An increasing number of Licensing Authorities are also looking at introducing CCTV in licenced vehicles.

3. Why do I need a new system?

We want taxis in Warrington to be fitted with the latest CCTV systems, to further strengthen our commitment to protecting the public, while ensuring the privacy and safety of drivers.

We were one of the first authorities to introduce CCTV and we have been working to promote best practice and to develop new guidance. This has included discussions with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) following concerns raised by some drivers about their privacy whilst vehicles are in private use. All drivers will now be given the option to turn off the CCTV system when the vehicle is in private use.

Some of the systems are now over three years old and it is not possible to fit an off switch to the old units. Some of the systems are also no longer supported by the original supplier. We have also had reports about the quality of some of the older systems. We therefore want to ensure that the units remain reliable and that the data is available in the event of an incident.

We understand that drivers have installed systems in good faith and we want you to have access to the latest systems that meet the new technical specification. These new systems will strike the right balance between driver privacy and safety.

4. What has the Council being doing about this issue?

We have been listening to the views of drivers and operators and working closely with the ICO to address their concerns. This has involved revising our policy and updating our technical specification and supporting documents. We have also completed an extensive procurement exercise to identify suppliers to carry out the replacement of the existing systems and to install new systems moving forward.

We have kept you advised via the newsletters and have updated the liaison group on the general position. We have had to complete these important steps above before we could confirm the latest situation and the way forward for all operators and drivers.

5. What will the new unit include?

The unit will include new cameras, an audio-button that can be triggered in the event of an incident, and a switch to de-activate the system when in personal use. We do not intend to use any of the old equipment. All old equipment will be disposed of as it does not meet the new requirements of the specification.

6. How much do they cost?

We still need to complete the final negotiations with the preferred supplier. In procuring new systems we have been extremely mindful of the quality of the systems as well as the cost. This has been carried out in accordance with the procurement framework.

7. Who will pay for the system?

The Council will cover the cost of replacing all the existing systems which were bought in good faith by operators and drivers. New applicants will be required to select systems at their own cost that can meet the latest technical specification. All information will be available on the Council's website.

8. How will it be funded?

The Council will cover the cost of replacing the old systems via our capital programme. We will seek to recover VAT to reduce the overall cost.

9. What about my privacy?

Your privacy is very important to us. We have developed a privacy impact assessment, privacy notices and made provision for a switch to deactivate the system when the vehicle is in private use. We will provide an audio trigger for use in the event of an incident but the system will be set up to allow the audio to stop running when the incident is over. We will only ever access the data when we have a legitimate reason to do so. Any need to access data from the CCTV units is recorded via a download request form and only carried out if justification for access is provided.

10. Who will be carry out the work?

We are entering into final negotiations with a multi-award-winning company specialising in this area of work. They will work in partnership with qualified auto electricians.

11. Will I need to hand in my old unit?

Yes, it is important that you have a system that is capable of meeting the technical specification and we also want to ensure that the unit is properly removed and destroyed to protect your privacy. It is important that any camera and other equipment is also removed to ensure that the system is robust and reliable.

12. What happens if I don't replace my CCTV system?

We want to work with you and give everyone the opportunity to replace their system at a convenient time. This is important so that you can continue to fulfil the conditions of your licence and in order that we can protect your privacy.

13. What will you be doing to publicise the benefits of CCTV?

We will be looking to work with you to promote the local trade and the benefits of using a vehicle with CCTV fitted.

14. What are other councils doing?

We were one of the first councils to promote the benefits of CCTV as part of an effective licensing policy. A number of local authorities have now introduced a requirement for CCTV, and we are aware of a number of others that are looking to introduce policies.