



Issue 2014

Drivers Handbook

**Important information for
Torbay Council drivers**

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1 Introduction

This Drivers Handbook has been issued to you to provide you with the procedures and to gain an understanding of the legal responsibilities that you must observe to make you more aware of both the responsibilities of your employer; Torbay Council and you as a driver of a Torbay Council vehicle or your own vehicle if on council business.

You should be considerate to any passengers you might be carrying, your colleagues, members of the public, (be that a pedestrian or another road user) and your vehicle at all times and conduct your duties in a safe and responsible manner.

Whether you drive a car, a small van or a large goods vehicle, you have the same responsibilities and should conduct yourself to the same high standard.

Some of you are by definition professional drivers; others drive as a function to assist the performance of their main duties.

Once driving you have exactly the same responsibilities.

2 Responsibilities

Torbay Council has a responsibility to provide vehicles that are fit for the purpose that you are being asked to use them for, in a reasonable condition and are legal in every aspect.

The checks that you carry out on your vehicle are essential to meet the councils' statutory responsibilities, which are listed later in this

book. The council also has a duty to ensure that you are suitably trained to use the vehicle and any equipment fitted to it.

Checking driving licences is one part of this process and will be carried out twice a year by either your line manager for owner driver vehicles or the TOR2 Fleet Office for council owned or leased vehicle drivers.

New drivers of Torbay Council vehicles will be given an initial driving assessment that will be carried out to ensure you are capable of driving the vehicle you will be asked to use as part of your duties.

You are expected to look after the vehicle which you use, carry out the necessary checks and drive in a safe and correct manner at all times in accordance with the requirements of the Highway Code.

Remember, if you are prosecuted, be it a driving offence or a vehicle defect, then it will be your licence that is endorsed, and you will be in court facing a fine which could potentially have an impact upon your employment.

3 Fitness to Drive

Drivers must be medically fit to drive at all times when on duty. Drivers of LGV vehicles are required to see the council's Occupational Health doctor to check their fitness to drive.

Drivers must report any change in their medical condition which may affect their ability to drive or carry out their duties, or of any other changes that could potentially affect their entitlement to a driving licence.

Drivers should not exceed their normal daily hours of work, they should take regular breaks – at least every 2 hours to prevent fatigue, routes should be planned in advance to allow for breaks etc.

Alcohol must not be consumed before duty (and at any time beforehand on the same day) or during the duty or breaks. This includes the consumption of alcoholic drinks without exceeding the legal limit for alcohol. Drivers must be aware that alcohol from drinking the day before can still remain in the blood for up to 24 hours, and that any alcohol can impair judgement.

Drivers must not drive whilst under the influence of any drugs which may affect driving ability, including those prescribed by a doctor.

Driving whilst under the influence of either drugs or alcohol whilst at work is considered to be an act of gross misconduct and disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal may be taken against you.

Please refer to the council's Drug & Alcohol Misuse policy and Smoke Free Environment policy, available from the HR intranet page.

4 Driving Licences

Before you take to the wheel of any Torbay Council vehicle you will be required to register with the Fleet Office and show your original licence. If you have a two part licence both the photo card and the paper section will need to be provided. Drivers of council vehicles will have their licences inspected twice a year and copies taken of both parts of the licence which will remain on file in the fleet office.

Drivers of their own vehicles on council business will have their licences, insurance certificate and MOT document (if required) inspected by their line managers and copies taken and held securely in their personnel folders.

Drivers of council vehicles will be required to complete and sign a “health and fitness to drive” declaration, which will be held in the Fleet Office along with a copy of their drivers licence. Drivers using their own vehicles on council business will complete a self declaration of fitness to drive when completing mileage claim forms including the requirement for business use insurance.

Both you and your employer are legally responsible to ensure that you are entitled to drive any vehicle that you are asked to, including goods vehicles, trailers, forklift trucks, PSV, your own vehicles on council business and plant and equipment. (Particularly in view of the changes to law post 1997 regarding the eligibility to drive vehicles between 3500kgs and 7500kgs GVW).

If there are any changes to your licence, be it name, address, addition of any penalty points, restrictions or changes of entitlement, you have a duty to inform the Fleet Office immediately and produce your licence for re submission and any accompanying documentation in the case of council vehicles.

For drivers using their own vehicles on council business you are required to inform your line manager and produce any accompanying documentation as before.

Failure to comply with the above will be considered a serious matter and permission to drive Torbay Council vehicles or drive their own vehicles on council business may be reconsidered and in some cases disciplinary action taken.

5 Driving Assessment

Before you are permitted to drive a Torbay Council vehicle you will be required to undertake a driving assessment by an authorised assessor who has been suitably trained to decide if the standard of your driving is up to the necessary level.

The assessor will satisfy the council requirement that you are fit and capable to drive and control the vehicle you will be using during your duties, and will not pose a danger to either yourself, others that might be affected by your driving, or the condition of the vehicle.

6 Driving Techniques and Standards

Whenever you are driving on behalf of Torbay Council you should take the necessary care to ensure compliance with all legal obligations.

You are expected to drive in a careful, considerate and defensive manner at all times observing all street and road signs, complying with the speed limits and taking account of local road conditions.

You must not drive aggressively. Such behaviour is considered unacceptable and will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter (see council's Disciplinary policy).

Driving without due care and attention and speeding offences may also be subject to disciplinary action.

Whilst driving (as with any work) for Torbay Council, you are representing the Authority and as such you should do so in the appropriate manner and comply with the Highway Code.

The best way to drive defensively is not to have any distractions inside your vehicle whilst driving.

By this we mean:

- **Reading whilst driving**
- **Smoking whilst driving** – this is illegal and a disciplinary offence under the council's Smoke Free Environment Policy.
- **Using a mobile phone** - it is illegal to use a mobile phone whilst driving. Pull over, park safely, and apply the handbrake.
- **Clear your mind** - you do not need to have any distractions which affect your ability to concentrate.
- **Time** - leave yourself enough time to complete the journey without speeding.
- **Speed** - driving above the speed limit is a criminal offence and could lead to accidents which could impact upon your employment with the council.
- **Weather** - when the conditions on the road are adverse, adjust your speed accordingly, drive to the road conditions.
- **Intersections** -be aware of other road users and pedestrians. Just because you have seen them do not assume they have seen you. Drive defensively and avoid an accident.

7 Reversing

Whenever you are reversing take extreme care. Unless you are a lone worker you must use a reversing assistant to guide you through the manoeuvre. There is no shame in getting help but plenty if you

hit something or someone, you will have to live with the consequences.

Safe reversing/reversing assistant training is available to all drivers of council vehicles and should form part of your training and development matrix following a suitable risk assessment by your line manager.

8 Insurance and Accidents

As with any insurance policy, it is only valid if the driver is entitled to drive the vehicle and the vehicle is legal in every aspect. This is why the daily vehicle checks are so important and why you are expected to carry them out without exception.

The council's motor insurance policy (covering council fleet vehicles) costs a considerable amount of money and the number of accidents/claims (avoidable or not) that occur has a significant impact on insurance costs as well as departmental operational costs for vehicles which are out of action whilst being repaired.

The more accidents, the bigger risk we are seen as, and the greater the cost. Accidents can also affect the council's ability to hold an Operator's Licence which allows it to operate large goods vehicles. Loss of this licence would seriously impact on the council's ability to perform its statutory duties to the residents of Torbay.

Employees using their own vehicles on council business must hold relevant insurance cover for "business use" and will provide evidence by way of cover documents to line managers at least annually.

Avoidable accidents will not be tolerated (see P11 for definition of an avoidable accident)

By driving to the standards set out in the section on Driving Techniques and Standards, accidents should become rare and of the unavoidable type. Some of our duties will involve working and driving in congested areas with many parked vehicles and other hazards. Negotiating these situations can be difficult, so you should exercise extreme care and attention, seek help on manoeuvres from colleagues, wait until the condition of the road clears, do not put yourself or your vehicle in a situation that could cause an accident. As the driver, you are responsible for your vehicle and any damage caused to it. Hitting a stationary object will automatically render you at fault. If you are delayed as a result of an obstruction, the cost of the delay is likely to be tiny compared to the cost of repairing your or another road users vehicle.

Please play your part in protecting the council's and your property and reputation by being extremely careful at all times.

If you do have an accident, then follow the procedure in the next section.

Only authorised passengers may be carried and then only if the proper seating and restraints are fitted to your vehicle.

Picking up hitch hikers or giving a lift to a 3rd party is strictly prohibited.

You must only use the Torbay Council or authorised hire vehicle for Torbay Council business, (the only exception for this is if you are registered to use your personal transport to travel between locations)

It is a breach of the driver's policy and against the law to use radios or mobile phones whilst driving.

9 Accidents

For the purposes of Torbay Council policy the definition of an avoidable accident is considered to be;

Where an avoidable incident or accident is attributed to a council driver which causes harm to people, or property of either party, that, by its nature, could have been prevented from happening by action or procedure, verbal, written or un-established.

9.1 Procedure

All council vehicle drivers will be bound by the terms and driving standards as set out in this handbook which will be issued to all drivers when they initially apply to join the register of approved drivers.

Drivers of council vehicles involved in an accident must immediately inform their line manager (or if out of hours and unavailable, the 24h Operational Support Hub) if the Operation Support Hub is contacted they will then make immediate contact with your line manager.

The responsible line manager must inform the Fleet Admin office of the accident and obtain an accident reference, which must then be communicated to the driver.

The Driver must attend the Fleet Office within 24 hours of the accident (or by 9am Monday morning if an accident occurred during the weekend) to complete the accident form, which will then be forwarded to the line manager to complete the accident investigation.

The line manager or appointed person delegated to do so will investigate the accident to the required procedure, complete the relevant investigation notes and action points, and return the completed form to the Fleet Office within 5 days.

Notification of potential disciplinary action may be appropriate and should be made by the line manager during the initial investigation.

Drivers should be aware that disciplinary action may be taken against them if their actions are deemed to have been negligent.

If you are involved or accused of being involved in an accident you must do the following:

9.2 Under no circumstances admit liability

Or enter in to any debate regarding liability. It is not for you to decide, leave this to our (or your) insurance company to assess the situation.

If you need to involve the emergency services do so without delay to deal with injured persons.

The following steps assume you are not badly injured and are capable of walking and talking after your accident.

Protect yourself, if you have high visibility clothing available wear it.

If you have a camera or mobile phone capable of taking (time dated) pictures of the accident scene do so before any of the vehicles are moved from the roadway. Record numbers of occupants in all other vehicles. This should only take a few moments and will provide vital back up evidence for the investigation.

Take pictures of the damage to your vehicle from all angles, damage to other vehicles, pictures of the intersection, roadway, road signs, in general take pictures of all aspects of the accident and the surrounding scene.

Look for people who were witness to the accident; you can record their details in the Accident Supplement.

Exchange necessary information with the other party, this can be recorded in the Accident Supplement. Give the other party the details and contact number for the Fleet Office so that they can provide our insurance details. If driving your own vehicle give them your details and the details of your insurance company.

9.3 Legal Requirements

The Road Traffic Act states that in the event of an accident the driver must stop and exchange the name and address of the driver and vehicle owner to all interested parties. If this is not possible, or if any person is injured at all, the driver must report the incident to a police station as soon as possible and in any case within 24 hours.

Move your vehicle if it is drivable to clear the roadway. As you already have pictures of the scene and other vehicles it is now safe for you to do so.

If your vehicle is un-drivable now is the time to call your line manager.

Your line manager will contact the Fleet Office who will arrange for recovery of your vehicle. If you are driving your own vehicle you should make the necessary arrangements to remove your vehicle.

If the police are in attendance give them all the information they request. If you suspect that the other party was under the influence of drink or drugs, report it to the officer, however do not make anything up and do not stretch the truth. Give only the facts as you know them.

Under no circumstances admit liability, even if you feel you were at fault.

9.4 Police Statements

If the police ask you to make a statement, you may do so if you choose, but only to the police officer and not in the hearing of any other witnesses.

If the police think you were at fault they will duly report this in their correspondence with the insurance companies. The officer will ask you if you are hurt or in need of medical attention. If you feel that you need medical attention report this to the officer. Even if you feel you do not need an ambulance, you should report to the officer all of your knocks, cuts, aches and pains. If you receive medical attention at the scene it will be a matter of record.

If you are hurt in any way you should make it known at the time of the accident

If a council vehicle and it is safe to drive and you are able, drive to the Fleet Office/Garage at Aspen Way. If the vehicle is un-drivable

then await the recovery vehicle that will have been arranged when you called your line manager.

When you arrive at the Fleet Office your accident will have been logged. Fill out the necessary documentation.

You may be asked to take your vehicle to the approved repairer to obtain an estimate. If so please do so without delay. Once approval for repair is received your vehicle will be called in for repair and as appropriate a replacement vehicle will be provided.

The cost of the accident will then be recharged back to your department as appropriate.

10 Damage Must Be Reported Immediately

No matter how trivial it seems, you have a duty to report any damage. Damage can affect the road worthiness of your vehicle, the asset value to the council and or the lease owner of the vehicle, and also the public perception of the council.

Fleet checks will be ongoing and any unreported damage found will be repaired and charged in full to your department. You will also be liable under the procedure for disciplinary action for failure to report.

11 Daily Vehicle Checks

Drivers of council vehicles must carry out daily checks as listed. A proforma for carrying out daily checks has been included for your use (Appendix 1). Owner drivers are recommended to carry out similar checks to their vehicles.

Any defects of council vehicles must be reported to the garage at Aspen Way and the vehicle taken there for inspection. The following checks on the condition of the vehicle must take place before the vehicle commences its daily service:

- Coolant water level.
- Engine oil level.
- Condition of the vehicle bodywork.
- Tyre pressures, condition and wear.
- Check wheels for condition and security.
- Lights, reflectors, markings and school bus signs when applicable.
- Windscreen wipers and washers including the washer reservoir level.
- Horn and all warning devices, including door warning buzzers.
- Check the condition, and working of seatbelts, including buckles and inertia reels.
- Check mirror condition and ensure that mirrors and windows necessary for driving are clean.
- Fire extinguisher and first aid kit.
- Brakes and speedometer when first driving off.

It is required that all council fleet vehicles are checked visually after use by each driver for signs of damage or defects which must be reported to the fleet office as soon as practicable.

Also check daily the operation of the wheelchair-lift (if fitted), any equipment required for restraining wheelchairs and passengers travelling in wheelchairs is present and in working condition.

12 Reporting Defects

All defects to council vehicles must be reported to the Fleet Office and must be entered in the vehicle defect book.

- (i) Most of the checks listed above are required to be checked by the driver by law and if faulty, including excessive oil or water leaks, must be reported as for a serious mechanical defect or breakdown.
- (ii) Other (minor) faults must be reported to the garage at Aspen Way.

Please note that it is not sufficient to report any defect verbally. A defect form must be completed at the Fleet Office.

Any damage resulting from failure to report a defect in the correct way, or from failure to carry out the above checks, may be regarded as negligence, which may result in action being taken under the council's Disciplinary policy to prevent a repetition, as well as a recharge of costs incurred to the department or organisation using the vehicle.

13 Cleaning

All vehicles must be kept in a reasonable condition of cleanliness inside and out. It should be cleaned at least once a week, and additional cleaning may be required at other times e.g. during heavy usage or during adverse weather conditions.

14 Parking and Vehicle Security

You should ensure that at all times your vehicle is parked in an appropriate way, in a suitable place and is not left in a position that could cause inconvenience or danger to other road users. On completion of duties council fleet drivers must park their vehicles securely as specifically directed within council procedures.

You should under no circumstances leave your vehicle running whilst unattended.

Your vehicle should be locked and secured whenever you leave it. Make sure you close all windows, lock all doors and set any alarm or immobilizer.

All drivers of council vehicles must complete a log book entry of the odometer mileage reading at the start and completion of their journeys. **This should be checked periodically by line managers and audited at least once annually.**

15 Goods Vehicles and Trailers

If you drive a vehicle over 3500 kgs GVW or tow a trailer at any time you may have to record your working and driving hours in line with Operator's Licence law.

Your working and driving hours will be restricted.

Depending on the operations that you are involved in you are required to complete either a daily/shift log book or a tachograph return. If your vehicle is fitted with a tachograph, you must use it, even if you believe you hold a valid exemption. Even if your vehicle holds a valid exemption the council has a requirement under law to maintain records as proof of statutory compliance.

Either of the methods of recording your driving and working time requires care and attention and must be regularly handed in to the Fleet office to comply with the law.

Driver's hours are restricted and rest periods are mandatory. You should be fully conversant with the law that applies to you as a driver.

Full information is available at the Fleet Office. Hire of vehicles should be arranged through the Fleet Office, who will advise you of your legal requirements.

Trailers under 750kgs are not included in the legislation but any trailer with a capacity to exceed 750kgs when loaded imposes goods vehicle legislation on the driver.

16 Loading

Any vehicle that you drive will have a gross vehicle weight GVW, gross train weight GTW and limits on the weight on each axle.

GVW is the maximum weight permitted for the vehicle when it is fully loaded

GTW is the GVW plus the maximum loaded weight of a trailer.

All limits are displayed on a plate on each vehicle.

Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES should these weights be exceeded.

The driver is responsible for ensuring the weight of the vehicle is lawful.

Should you have any doubts about the load in or on your vehicle, take it to the weighbridge at Torbay Transfer Station and test weigh it.

If you are found to be overloaded by either the police VOSA or any other enforcement agency it is you as the driver that will be held responsible, fined and potentially have your licence revoked.

Torbay Council's O' Licence is also vulnerable to prosecution. Some vehicles have on board weighing equipment. Never ignore the readings or tamper with the equipment.

Overloading of vehicles applies equally to vehicles under 3500kgs GVW.

It is also the responsibility of the driver to ensure that the load is correctly secured.

You must ensure that the load is correctly secured so as not to cause danger to any other road user, pedestrian, or passenger you may have with you.

You should secure any load such that it will not move whilst you are driving, even under heavy braking or other sudden changes of speed, direction and allowing for uneven road conditions.

If you have any further queries contact your line manager or the Fleet Office.

17 Gas and Hazardous Materials

You must notify the Fleet office if you are intending to carry any flammable, hazardous or explosive products.

Advice will be given by the Fleet Office/Fleet Manager.

18 Passenger Transport Vehicles

Regular drivers of these vehicles should obtain the separate Drivers Handbook issued by Transport Co-ordination.

Some duplication will be noticed, however it is the procedures that are set out in this Drivers Handbook that must be adhered to at all times as a part of policy.

Transport Co-ordination also offer specialist training in areas of passenger loading, restraint of wheelchairs and other equipment.

If you are an occasional driver of these vehicles then you should contact the Fleet Office who will advise you on any requirements for legal compliance.

19 Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA)

VOSA conducts spot checks on heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles to:

- prevent the use of dangerous, and potentially dangerous, lorries and buses on the roads
- deter drivers and operators from using defective vehicles on the road by issuing penalties
- advise operators on the condition of lorries and buses in use, for licensing and other purposes
- promote public awareness of the need to maintain vehicles in a roadworthy condition in the interests of road safety and environmental protection
- ensure that drivers are complying with regulations on drivers' hours, loading, speed and licensing

VOSA are able to issue fixed penalty notices to drivers found to have broken the law at roadside checks. The ability to issue fixed

penalties has also been extended to apply to more offences, such as drivers' hours and driver CPC infringements.

Fixed penalties always include a fine, which can range from £30 to £200 which YOU the driver will have to pay - not the council, and can also attract penalty points on YOUR driving licence

It is important to remember that VOSA will also be keeping a record of the fixed penalties you receive and if you get too many, the agency could report the matter to the Traffic Commissioner, who could suspend or revoke your vocational driving entitlement.

You should always make sure you comply with the law in all areas, but you should pay particular attention to ensuring you:

Carry out your daily vehicle defect checks every time YOU take over a vehicle - YOU will get penalty points along with fines if YOU use a vehicle with defective brakes, steering-gear or tyres.

Comply with all the rules on drivers' hours and records – YOU could be fined by a fixed penalty up to £200 for every infringement, more if it is taken to court.

Know your load is safe, secure and not overloaded – YOU will get penalty points along with fines if YOU use a vehicle that is dangerous because of the way in which it is loaded.

Obey all traffic rules and always watch YOUR speed.

Keep the address on your driving licence up to date (YOU could be fined £1,000 for failing to do this anyway) – otherwise YOU could be asked to pay a deposit of up to £900 at the roadside.

Never use a hand-held phone when driving.

Never drive a vehicle that has been prohibited and never interfere with an immobilisation device or notice.

Always comply with requests from enforcement officers – obstructing them is a serious criminal offence.

If you are asked to make a formal statement, remember that you have the right to legal representation.

Always inform your line manager and TOR2 Fleet Office as soon as possible if you are stopped at a roadside check.

20 A Reminder to All Employees

Smoking is not permitted in any council vehicle.

All non corporate signs and stickers must be removed from inside and outside the vehicles; this includes the removal of stickers on the windows, toys hanging and any other signs/stickers that are clearly visible from outside the vehicle. The only items that should be on the vehicles windscreen is a tax disc, an operator's licence disc (if applicable) and a car parking pass (if applicable) - everything else must be removed.

21 Eco-Driving Driving Behaviour

We can minimise the environmental impact and cost of our car journeys if we make small adjustments to the way we drive. Good driving habits could reduce fuel consumption and emissions by 10%.

These points are really worth bearing in mind

1. Driving off straight away is better for a cold engine, than allowing it to warm up by idling. Using as high a gear as possible will minimise initial cold start emissions.
2. Accelerating hard, braking sharply and driving aggressively are costly on fuel and the environment as well as being dangerous. Driving more slowly is not only good for road safety, but saves fuel. Driving at 70mph can use up to 30% more fuel than if you were to drive at 50mph. Thinking ahead means you can drive smoothly, avoiding sudden braking and sharp acceleration. This reduces fuel consumption and emissions and helps to cut down on car and tyre wear.
3. Regular maintenance of motor vehicles ensures the engine is kept in tune, thereby cutting down emissions. Skimping on servicing will probably cost you more in the long run anyway. According to the DETR 90% of badly polluting vehicles can be re-tuned within 15 minutes.
4. If you expect to be stuck in a traffic queue for more than a couple of minutes switch off your engine.
5. Inflating your tyres to ensure they are at the correct pressure will save fuel and will also increase the life span of your tyres. Check tyre pressures frequently at least once a month and before driving at high speed. Keep tyres properly inflated as low tyre pressure is a safety risk and wastes fuel.

6. Don't leave heavy objects in the boot of your car or on your roof rack unnecessarily as this also increases fuel consumption. Avoid dead weight and aerodynamic drag.
7. Don't make lots of short trips in a day - try to combine them. Short journeys, of less than two miles, when the engine is cold pollute up to 60% more per mile than when the engine is hot. Driving techniques include reading the road as far ahead as possible and anticipate the flow of traffic to enable steady driving with constant speed.
8. Use air conditioning and electrical equipment wisely and switch it off if not needed. Electrical energy is converted from extra fuel burnt in a combustion engine, so electrical equipment doesn't work "for free" – it always costs extra energy and money.



Daily Vehicle Check Sheet

Reg Number:							
Fleet Number:	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Date (insert)							
Odometer Reading:							

INITIAL each item each day when checked. If defected you **MUST** complete a **Defect Report**

Daily Checks * Topping up levels is to be considered as a Checking Procedure

Engine Oil Level *							
Coolant Level *							
Lights & Indicators							
Wheel Nuts (Visual)							
Tyres (Visual)							
Wipers / Washers							
Horn							
Mirrors							
Fluid Leaks							
Brakes							
Reverse Bleeper							
Road Fund Licence							
Electrical Connections							
Beacon Light							
Vehicle Clean - exterior							
Vehicle Clean - interior							
Body Damage							
Reflectors							
Security of load							
Defect Report Y / N							
Initial boxes when checked							

Drivers Note

Defects of **ANY** Nature, NOT Just those in the Check List **MUST** be reported on the reverse with full details of the fault and if when reported to TOR2

PLEASE NOTE it is the driver's responsibility to ensure the defects are reported to TOR2 as per the Drivers Handbook