

Licensing Committee

Monday, 14 July 2025

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Munro (Chair), and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Matthew Dormer (during Minute No's 57 to 60), Andrew Fry, Sid Khan, Gary Slim, Jen Snape, Craig Warhurst (substituting for Councillor Brandon Clayton) and Paul Wren

Officers:

Vanessa Brown and Kiran Lahel, Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Democratic Services Officer:

Pauline Ross

52. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sachin Mathur and Brandon Clayton, with Councillor Craig Warhurst in attendance as the substitute Member for Councillor Brandon Clayton.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

54. MINUTES

The minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting of 15th May 2025 were presented to Members.

Councillor Andrew Fry apologised for not submitting his apologies for this meeting.

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 15th

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Chair

May 2025 be approved as true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

55. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers.

56. REVIEW OF MANDATING CCTV IN TAXIS.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report to Members. The purpose of the report was to review the mandating of CCTV in taxis.

Members were informed that on 1st September 2022 Redditch Borough Council had introduced The Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards ('The Standards'). The Standards were published in July 2020 and included the use of CCTV as an area for Local Authority discussion.

The Council already had a voluntary CCTV option in place for all vehicle owners. On introduction of the policy in 2022 Officers had advised that they would monitor intelligence and would engage with partners to ensure that the policy remained in line with what the data was showing us.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, highlighted to Members, that as detailed in the report, currently only a small number of licensing authorities (7%) had made it a legal requirement for all taxi and private hire vehicles to be fitted with mandatory CCTV systems. These authorities had been able to demonstrate through evidence and intelligence that such a policy was necessary. More recently these had included Barnsley Council, Portsmouth and Southampton, Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council. Swindon Borough Council did mandate CCTV but had then reversed the decision due to a number of challenges.

The Council's current policy which came into effect on 1st September 2022 was consulted upon and stated that the Council recognised that CCTV systems could act as an additional safeguard, providing protection, confidence and reassurance to the public, when travelling in a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle as well as to drivers, who could also be victims of violence and abuse.

Furthermore the current policy allowed the proprietor of any vehicle, which had been authorised to be used as a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle, to install CCTV cameras in their vehicle subject to the following requirements:-

- No installation of a CCTV system shall take place within a licensed vehicle unless the proprietor of the vehicle has notified the Council in advance.
- All CCTV systems which are installed into licensed vehicles must be compliant with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. The system must also be compliant with the Information Commissioner's requirements in respect of registering the system and the capturing, storing, retaining and using any recorded images.

Officers had assessed the complaints data received by WRS and the context of information received alongside the data from the current WRS Strategic assessment. On evaluation it was evident that the number of complaints received were more directed at driver behaviour or vehicle standards than they were connecting a driver to a serious offence or safeguarding issue such as assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, or substance misuse.

Members were further informed that the safeguarding training for taxi drivers now included mitigating such situations and covered both drivers' personal safety and their safeguarding responsibilities.

Officers had a proactive working relationship with West Mercia Police, Community Safety, and WRS Officers were part of the Multi Agency Targeted Enforcement (MATE) network in all parts of the County. These multi-agency meetings addressed common problem issues and taxi matters were discussed regularly and intelligence analysts also examined their own data and complaints information, and currently there was no evidence that had been presented to Officers whereby a change in the Council's current CCTV position was necessary.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, drew Members' attention to paragraph 3.21 (page 13 of the main agenda pack), which stated that:-

"It is important to note that if the Officers in partnership with external agencies felt there was a requirement for mandating CCTV in taxis they would bring the data and evidence to consider without delay to the Licensing Committee in order to proactively safeguard the travelling public."

Officers had determined that there was currently not a requirement or need for mandatory CCTV in taxis in the Borough. However, Members were reassured that Officers would continue to monitor and periodically review this.

Members debated mandating CCTV, the expense to taxi drivers with installing a CCTV system in their vehicle and the number of licensed drivers in the Borough that had had a CCTV system installed. Members also commented that CCTV would also protect the drivers as well as their passengers.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS responded to questions raised during the debate and Members were informed that CCTV in taxis was not for driver safety it was predominantly for passenger safety. The costs to install such a system, which met all of the required industry standards was approximately £500 to £1,200.

WRS had not been advised that any taxis in the Borough had had CCTV installed in their vehicles. With regard to the fitting of a CCTV system being expensive, Members were informed that, any CCTV system fitted into a licensed vehicle would have to meet industry standards / requirements. Therefore, the Council, not WRS, would have to procure a suitable supplier who met all of these industry standards / regulations.

Members raised further questions on a CCTV system being used, but the driver turning off the system to commit misdemeanours.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, reassured Members that should a CCTV system be installed, then the driver would be required to keep the CCTV on when carrying paying passengers.

Members stated that they were surprised that drivers did not want / have CCTV in their licensed vehicles to protect themselves.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, reiterated that as stated earlier during the course of the meeting , that a new element was now included in the mandatory Safeguarding Training for taxi drivers, which included mitigating such situations and covered both drivers' personal safety and their safeguarding responsibilities. The feedback received from taxi drivers who had attended the Safeguarding Training, since this new element was included, had been very positive.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, further suggested that WRS could look to do more communications on how safe it was to be a licensed driver and for passengers of taxis that were licensed by Redditch Borough Council.

Some Members further commented that people used Uber as they were a lot cheaper and younger passengers often felt safer as the

vehicle information was provided to passengers and vehicles could be tracked on the Uber application.

The Council's Legal Advisor responded to a question on sharing CCTV footage, and in doing so informed Members that, the Council would be the Data Controller for such footage and would need to determine where that data was stored and who would be able to access CCTV footage. CCTV footage would not be made available to a licensed driver / passenger but would be made available to the Police, under the Council's data sharing protocol. CCTV systems were designed for safeguarding and there was strict governance / protocols and a high standard around the safe storage of CCTV data and the use and sharing of CCTV footage.

As highlighted by the Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, there was currently no evidence to mandate CCTV in taxis. Should future evidence show a need to mandate CCTV in taxis, the Council would need to ensure that as the Data Controller all regulations / protocols were met and followed to the high standards required. As the Data Controller there would be a cost implication for the Council.

If a licensed driver wanted to install and use CCTV in their vehicle they would have to notify the Council in order to ensure that they complied with the Council's current voluntary CCTV policy.

Some Members commented that the thought of CCTV in all taxis in the Borough was an excellent idea. However, with the cost of living crisis and being undercut by Uber, taxi drivers were struggling financially. So if there was currently no evidence to mandate CCTV in taxis, mandating it would not help the taxi trade. Having to purchase an expensive piece of kit would be difficult for the taxi trade.

Councillor A. Fry commented that he regularly used taxis and that his experience of using taxis and licensed drivers was excellent. The majority of taxi drivers wanted to provide a good service. The main thing was that WRS had highlighted that currently there was no evidence to mandate CCTV in taxis in the Borough, and that we were a long way off from mandating CCTV.

Members asked as to how confident Officers were that the feedback received from the taxi trade was a fair representation.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, explained that a number of people were invited to the taxi forum; operators, licensed drivers, Councillors, and that that general consensus was that they did not want to take forward mandating CCTV due to the expensive cost.

On being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED that

the contents of the report be noted.

57. REVIEW OF DELEGATION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES OUTSIDE OF POLICY DUE TO AGE.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report to Members.

The purpose of the report was to update Committee Members on the delegated authority to WRS Officers, to determine applications for licenses to use vehicles as hackney carriage or private hire vehicles where the vehicles did not meet the Council's required criteria in respect of the age of the vehicle.

It was noted that there was a typographical error in paragraph 3.9 (page 51 of the main agenda report). The date should read 1st August 2024 and not 1st August 2025.

Members were reminded that on 29th March 2023, following consultation, that Licensing Committee Members had directed Officers to proceed with the actions required to delegate authority to determine applications for licences to use vehicles as hackney carriages or private hire vehicles where the vehicles did not meet the Council's required criteria in respect of the age of the vehicle.

A considerable number of such applications were made each year, and it was recognised that arranging and attending Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings to determine such applications, was time consuming and resource intensive for all involved from arranging the Sub-Committee Hearings to collating information and getting Members of the Licensing Committee together to determine such applications.

The proposed delegation to Officers was considered by the Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) and on 7th March 2024 the CRWP made a recommendation to Council that, for a trial 12 month period, that Officers be given delegated authority to determine hackney carriage and private hire vehicle applications that fell outside of the Council's age criteria policy.

On 20th May 2024 Council resolved that the delegation be given to Officers for a 12 month period as recommended by the CRWP. The trial period was due to end on 31st July 2025.

As highlighted in the preamble above, Council approved a 12 month trial period rather than a permanent delegation to Officers.

This report sought to update Committee Members on the outcome of the 12 month trial period.

Officers had been determining such applications since 1st August 2024 using a robust set of procedures that provided a clear audit trail on the decision-making process.

32 vehicles had been inspected, which was not dissimilar in numbers to those considered by Licensing Sub-Committee Members in the previous year (39) from June 2023 to July 2024.

During the 12 month trial period, 4 vehicles were refused and 28 were granted.

The process had worked well and had ensured well-reasoned and detailed decisions were reached using professional and transparent methods. Vehicles were inspected by a Licensing Officer with a qualified mechanic at the Council's dedicated testing facility. Officers had implemented a very strict criteria and vehicles could be seen at the Council's testing facility within a short period of time.

Officers had also noted an increase in vehicle standards throughout the duration of the 12 month trial period and overall feedback from the applicants appeared to be positive. The flexibility that this process offered enabled applicants to be dealt with more efficiently and quickly and at a time that was convenient to the applicant.

Officers considered that the 12 month trial period had been successful and would invite Licensing Committee Members to consider directing Officers to carry out a consultation to establish if the relevant stakeholders agreed with the Officers' assessment of this delegated process and whether it could be made as a permanent delegation to Officers.

Councillor S. Khan commented that he found it very interesting to note that Officers could see vehicles in a short period of time, as he had received complaints from taxi drivers who had found it difficult to get an appointment. Furthermore, could Officers evidence the increase in vehicle standards? Also, what did other authorities in Worcestershire do for age criteria vehicles?

In response the Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, explained that the time was quicker for applicants to be given an appointment at the Council's testing facility than the time taken to arrange a Sub-Committee Hearing. Should the delegation of Officers end, then Officers would be looking to arrange two

Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings in August 2025 in order to deal with the number of age criteria applications received.

There were two full time mechanics at the Council's testing facility. Officers had fed back that vehicles being presented for test were much cleaner and that drivers appeared to be taking more pride in their vehicles.

With regards to other local authorities and age criteria vehicles, Worcester City Council, Wyre Forest District Council and Malvern Hills District Council had all delegated authority for such applications to be determined by WRS Licensing Officers.

Following the lengthy debate and questions raised, on being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED that

- a) a six-week consultation period be carried out with relevant stakeholders to consider a permanent delegation to Officers to determine hackney carriage and private hire vehicle applications where the vehicle did not meet the council's policy in respect of the age of the vehicle; and
- b) the results of the 6 week consultation be reported back to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee.

58. WORK PROGRAMME

No amendments or additions to the work programme were raised.

RESOLVED that the Licensing Committee Work Programme 2025/2026, be noted.

59. OFFICER UPDATE(S) - ENFORCEMENT AND APPEAL MATTERS

There was no Enforcement or Appeals Matters on this occasion.

60. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.