

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Nic Pioli (Chair), Councillor Simon Farmer (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Roger Bennett, Matthew Dormer, Sharon Harvey, Joanna Kane, Gary Slim and Monica Stringfellow

Officers:

Kiran Lahel (Worcestershire Regulatory Services), Hazel Powell (Worcestershire Regulatory Services) and Michael Clohessy (Solicitor, Anthony Collins)

Democratic Services Officers:

M Sliwinski

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Clayton and King.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting of 2nd April 2026 were presented to Members.

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 2nd April 2026 be approved as true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There was no public speaking.

5. HACKNEY CARRIAGE TABLE OF FARES - REQUEST FOR VARIATION

Chair

The Principal Licensing Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report to Members. The purpose of the report was to consider an increase in the hackney carriage table of fares, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

Officers detailed that in considering the annual review of the hackney carriage tables of fares, the Redditch Taxi Association (RTA) were initially contacted in February 2026 to ask whether the RTA would be seeking to vary the tables of fares for the next 12-month period. At that time, the RTA confirmed that no change to the fares was required.

The views of the Redditch Taxi Association in February 2026 were reported back to the Licensing Committee on 9th March 2026. The Committee accepted those views, but in light of the conflict in the middle east causing instability in the economy and fluctuating fuel prices, requested that the matter remain under review.

The Redditch Taxi Association (RTA) were contacted again on 5th May 2026. The RTA had now proposed an increase to the 'hiring charge' on all three tariffs by £0.20p, citing concerns with the petrol and diesel prices remaining high since early March, the cost of living increases, and trade competition from licensed vehicles operating within the Redditch area but licensed by other licensing authorities.

There was no proposal to change the existing tariff for any distance travelled otherwise known as the "mileage" charge rate.

Making the requested amendments would increase the cost of a 2-mile journey in a Hackney Carriage licensed by the Council on tariff one (the standard unit under which comparisons are made) from £6.65 to £6.85. which was a 3.0% increase.

Legislation dictated that any increase in fares must be preceded by publishing a public notice which would be in a local newspaper, objections would be invited for 14 days from the date of this publication. Should none be received, the new fares would come into force on 6th July 2026. Should objections be received these would be considered by the Licensing Committee.

Members expressed the view that the proposed increase to the 'hiring charge' represented a fair proposal given the economic conditions and fuel prices. A question was asked regarding the frequency of the requests by Redditch Taxi Association (RTA) to vary the tables of fares. Officers responded that an increase to the 'hiring charge' element of the tables of fares was also requested last year but this followed a number of previous years when no

changes were requested or made to the hackney carriage tables of fares.

The resolutions as printed in the report were moved by Councillor Matt Dormer and seconded by Councillor Sharon Harvey.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that

- 1) The proposed table of taxi fares as set out in Appendix 3 be advertised as a public notice and objections from the public invited in accordance with the requirements of section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976.**
- 2) If no objections are received from the public within 14 days of publication of the notice that the proposed tariff will come into effect on 6th July 2026.**
- 3) If objections are received in the stated time, that the matter will be considered further at the next meeting of the Licensing Committee, and a decision made as to whether the variations to the table of fares should be made.**

6. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE FEES AND CHARGES - UPDATE REPORT ON THE CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report to Members. The purpose of the report was to consider representations received in objection to the increase in licence fees associated with Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences.

Officers explained that as part of the legal agreement established with the formation of WRS, licensing remains a reserved matter. Thus, all policy decisions in licensing as well as income and fee setting remained the responsibility of the full Council at Redditch.

The proposal in the report for a 3% increase to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licenses for 2026/27 was calculated as to enable the service to achieve a cost recovery (cost-neutral) position for the service. The Council was not legally allowed to make a profit from its licensing service. In response to a Member question, it was explained that the decision that the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences (as well as other licensing) should be self-

financing was made by all WRS partner authorities upon the formation of WRS Board.

In accordance with section 70(1) of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, on 14th January 2026, a notice appeared in the Redditch Advertiser announcing the 3% proposed fee increases referenced in paragraph 3.2 of the report and inviting objections within 28 days of the date of newspaper's publication. A copy of the notice was also placed at the Council's offices. The last date for objections was 10th February 2026.

It was reported that the licensing service received two objections, attached at Appendices 1 and 2, to the proposed 3% fee increases for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences.

Officers stated that if licensing application projections remain the same as for 2025/26 and there is no fee change to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire personal licences and operator licences for 2026/27, the service would run at a deficit of between £4,000 and £5,000 for 2026/27.

It was noted that in proposing the 3% increase a number of variables had been analysed and costed including (but not restricted to):

- Officer costs – inclusive of the salary pay award approved in April 2026, which was a 3.3% increase. All officers involved in the licensing process were taken into account including WRS officers, and Democratic Services and Legal officers.
- The number of Committee and Sub-Committee meetings taking place across the year. In 2025/26 there were 16 Licensing Sub-Committees and 6 Licensing Parent Committees administered.
- The total number of Taxi applications processed throughout the year. In Redditch in 2025/26 there were: 175 Hackney Carriage Vehicle (HCV) applications and 228 Private Hire Vehicle (PCV) applications processed.
- Driver licences processed (although this was not included in the objections received).

Members queried the actual values for each of the variables considered in working out the proposed licensing fee variation for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences. Officers responded that a standard cost formula was applied to each of the variables by the Council's finance team which undertook the calculations. Some Members pointed out that even though the factors which were considered and the outcome of

calculations was set out in the report, full details of the cost formula applied had not been made available to Members.

It was noted that all the districts in the county set their own fees in respect of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences.

Members discussed the objections that had been raised to the proposed fee increases. Reference was made to comments in the objections that there had been delays in the processing of applications for vehicle licences and driver licences. The Principal Licensing Officer responded that WRS officers had met with the taxi trade as part of the taxi forum. A lot of the issues raised by the taxi trade revolved around the application forms. It was explained that due to the current process, the WRS often received application information in parts. This had significantly lengthened the processing time for applications. The WRS was now putting an online application process in place, with both the vehicle and driver online application forms to go live later in June 2026. This would enable application queries to be dealt with through the online portal.

During the debate, some Members commented that the current licensing service model at Redditch was unviable in the context of the licensing application fees being significantly cheaper at Wolverhampton City Council, and even significant reductions in the fees charged by Redditch Borough Council would likely not lead to any substantial increase in the number of applications received by Redditch. It was explained that due to the volume of drivers submitting applications with Wolverhampton City Council there were economies of scale allowing Wolverhampton to offer low application fees.

Some Members expressed the view that the rigorous licensing conditions set by Redditch Borough Council, for example the mandatory twice-yearly compliance testing of vehicles, were beneficial to the standard of taxis licensed in Redditch and should be retained. Members queried whether the Council would be able to sustain the financial impact if the licensing fees were to be capped at the current level for 2026/27. Officers provided an affirmative reply that the Council could afford to freeze fees in this area.

A recommendation was proposed by Councillor Sharon Harvey and seconded by Councillor Gary Slim that the licence fees in respect of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences for 2026/27 remain at the current level.

An alternative recommendation was proposed by Councillor Matt Dormer and seconded by Councillor Roger Bennett that the licence fees in respect of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle

licences and operator licences be reduced by 5% for 2026/27 compared to the current fee levels.

In response to a question about the impact of a 5% decrease to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licence and operator licence fees, officers confirmed that the projected operating deficit to the licensing service would be double that of the projected loss if the fees were to remain unchanged.

A Member commented that he proposed the 5% decrease to the fees as the taxi trade should be supported by the Council at this time and highlighted that there was currently not enough enforcement checks on the taxi ranks undertaken in Redditch among other issues highlighted in other parts of the discussion.

Another Member questioned whether decreasing the fees would not set a precedent and make the service increasingly unaffordable to the Council in future years. It was highlighted that capping the fees for 2026/27 at the current level would already result in a deficit to the Council.

The recommendations were put to the vote in the order they were proposed.

On the recommendation that the licence fees in respect of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences for 2026/27 remain at the current level (as set for 2025/26) being put to the vote, the majority of members present voted in favour. Therefore, it was:

RECOMMENDED to Council that

The licence fee in respect of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences for 2026/27 remain at the current fee level.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

Officers detailed that the Annual Licensing Policy review would be reported to the Licensing Committee in October 2026. In addition, should objections be raised to the Hackney Carriage table of fares or variation contained therein, this would need to be reported for consideration at the next Licensing Committee meeting for decision. Another meeting might therefore be required before October 2026.

Members requested that an annual report of licensing enforcement activity be added to the Committee work programme.

A Member asked whether it was planned to organise elected member visits to the compliance testing facility for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles at the Crossgates Depot, as was done in the past few years, so Members could view the process and speak to the Taxi engineers who undertake the safety inspections. A Member commented that she had undertaken such a visit in the previous municipal year and had found it informative, therefore, encouraged that the member visits should also take place this year if possible.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was confirmed that the Committee would not be moving to exempt session for item 9 on the agenda (Minute No. 9) – Officer Update(s) – Enforcement and Appeal Matters. The Committee remained in public session for that item.

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

Officers reported that a taxi enforcement operation had recently been undertaken in Redditch by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) jointly with Redditch Borough Council's Licensing Officers and officers from West Mercia Police.

During the enforcement operation, 17 Redditch Borough Council registered taxis were stopped. 10 were found to be compliant on the spot.

Of the 7 vehicles referred for further checks at the Crossgates Depot, 5 were found to be safe on inspection, but 2 vehicles were found to be unsafe. The two vehicles in question were one private hire vehicle and one hackney carriage licensed vehicle, both of which were found to have defective tyres. The licence holders of these two vehicles were suspended following the checks and it was planned that these licence holders would have their licences reviewed before the Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis).

Following this update, Members asked if during the enforcement operation any vehicles licensed by Wolverhampton City Council were also stopped. It was responded that 11 Wolverhampton-licensed vehicles were stopped as part of the operation of which enforcement action was taken in respect of the licence holders of 4 of these vehicles.

In response to a further question, it was confirmed that Wolverhampton City Council officers participated in many of the enforcement operations jointly with the district councils in the area.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The Meeting commenced at 7.04 pm
and closed at 7.58 pm