



Licensing Committee

Tuesday, 8th April, 2025

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Munro (Chair), Councillor Sachin Mathur (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Matthew Dormer, Gary Slim, Jen Snape, Monica Stringfellow and Paul Wren

Officers:

Vanessa Brown, Michelle James and Niall McMenamin

Democratic Services Officers:

Gavin Day

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Sharon Harvey with Councillor Juma Begum in attendance as substitute.

Apologies were also received from Councillors Brandon Clayton and Sid Khan.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

41. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers.

42. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION ON MANDATORY SAFEGUARDING REFRESHER TRAINING FOR TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

The Interim Principal Licensing Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report to Members. The purpose of the report was to consider the consultation responses regarding mandatory safeguarding refresher training.

In response to the publication of the Department of Transport's "Taxi & Private Hire Standards" the council published a new "Taxi

Chair

Policy” in September 2022. The new Taxi Policy introduced the requirement for all new drivers to undertake safeguarding training. However, there was no requirement for continued refreshment to highlight changes in current safeguarding concerns and landscape, it was further detailed that those who had their licences granted prior to the new “taxi Policy” coming into effect in September 2022 may not have received any formal safeguarding training.

In October 2024, the Licensing Committee agreed for relevant consultees to be contacted on mandatory safeguarding refresher training during licence renewal for all drivers. The consultation lasted for 12 weeks and was predominantly an online exercise with responses being collated via an online portal. The list of consultees was detailed on pages 5 and 6 of the Supplementary Agenda pack.

33 responses were received with the most (28) being from licence holders, the majority of respondents (72.73%) were in objection to having mandatory safeguarding refresher training. the main reasons given by those who expanded on their reasons were around the cost and availability of the training.

In addressing the concerns, officers detailed that the course would be supplied at a cost of £20 which would be cost neutral to WRS and would take place frequently. It was explored if a subsidy should be provided, however, it was decided that the cost was modest and was seen as good value. Officers drew Member’s attention to the table at paragraph 4.5 shown on page 8 of the Supplementary Agenda pack, the table detailed the costs charged by other authorities and that £20 was equal to or lower than the other local authorities contacted, thus supporting their view that it was good value.

The following was clarified after questions from Members:

- That the cost of the course was decided after the consultation had started, therefore, some of the comments were given without that information being known.
- That the training was currently intended to all be Face-to-Face, however, the merits of putting on a remote session for refresher training were being explored.
- Translations were not considered as it was expected that a certain level of conversational English should be demonstrated to hold a licence with Redditch Borough Council and therefore translations were not deemed necessary.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates were discussed and it was clarified that drivers were required to have a DBS certificate and subscribe to the update service as a condition for

their licence. Additionally, it was detailed that all passenger assistance individuals were also required to have a valid DBS certificate.

Members stated that safeguarding training was very important and many expressed the opinion that considering the importance of the trade in identifying vulnerable individuals, training every 3 years could be deemed too infrequent to keep knowledge up to date with developments in safeguarding concerns.

It was further stated that in their opinion some of the respondents did not understand safeguarding and their responsibilities and that appropriate training could assist protecting both drivers and passengers. This was noted as being evident from the responses given in objection to the consultation.

Members questioned if the consultation was clear enough in describing its purpose, however, Officers assured members that the opening description was adequate to detail its purpose, and some misunderstanding could be detailed as Drivers either not reading the text at the start or not understanding safeguarding which could highlight the need for the training.

Members were broadly in support of safeguarding refresher training but expressed disappointment that the trade did not generally appear to support it. On being put to a vote it was:

RESOLVED that

the existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licensing Policy be amended, as detailed in appendix 2 on page 21 of the Supplementary Agenda pack.

43. ANNUAL REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE TABLE OF FARES

The Interim 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.

Officers detailed that in considering the annual review of the hackney carriage tables of fares, the Redditch Taxi Association (RTA) were contacted in March 2025 to ask whether the RTA would be seeking to vary the table of fares. The response was that an increase of 10% was requested on the "Hiring Charge" only, with no increase of the "Mileage" portion.

Making the requested amendment would increase the cost of a two mile journey (the standard unit under which comparisons are made) from £6.25 to £6.65 which was a 6.4% increase.

Officers drew Members attention to page 26 of the Supplementary Agenda pack which detailed the change (reduction) in fuel costs since January 2022 when the fare was last altered. However, Officers further detailed that fuel was only one factor to consider and that during that same period, inflation had risen by 11.26%. Therefore, Officers deemed the request reasonable and supported the 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 1st June 2025. Officers requested that should objections be received; they would be considered under delegated authority after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Licencing Committee.

Members saw no issues with the principle of increasing the base fare if that is what the trade requested, however, it was noted that they needed to take care as not to price themselves out of the market.

Members expressed some concern with granting delegated authority to the licencing team to consider any objections, they stated that objections should go before Members of the Licencing Committee to be considered. Therefore, Councillor David Munro proposed an alternative recommendation, requiring any objections to be considered by the licencing Committee, this was seconded by Councillor Paul Wren.

On being put to a vote it was

RESOLVED that

- **Officers were directed to amend the Hackney Carriage Table of fares as detailed at Appendix 5 on page 33 of the Supplementary Agenda pack following the statutory process for consultation.**
- **That any objections from the consultation process be determined by the Licencing Committee.**

44. WORK PROGRAMME

Officers detailed that following the request from the previous Licencing Committee on 18th March 2025, **“CCTV in Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles”** has been placed on the work

programme to be considered at the Licencing Committee on 8th December 2025.

Officers detailed to Member that in support of the work programme item “**Compliance Testing for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles –Viability of approving alternative testing stations**”, visits had been organised at the Crossgates Depot so Members could view the process and speak to the Taxi engineers who undertake the safety inspections. The two proposed dates were 16th June 2025 and 23rd June 2025. Calendar invites would be sent out to all Licencing Members via Democratic Services.

The Chair further detailed that he had a visit to the Depot to examine the process and had found it informative, therefore, he encouraged all Members who are able to attend to do so.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.09 pm

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