

## MINUTES

**Present:**

Councillor David Munro (Chair), Councillor Sachin Mathur (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Brandon Clayton, Andrew Fry, Sid Khan, Gary Slim, Jen Snape and Paul Wren

**Officers:**

Kiran Lahel and Vanessa Brown

**Democratic Services Officers:**

Gavin Day

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were given for Councillor Matt Dormer.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Licensing Committee of 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 were presented to Members.

**RESOLVED that**

**The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.**

**4. PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There was no public speaking.

### 5. COMPLIANCE TESTING FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES - VIABILITY OF APPROVING ALTERNATIVE TESTING STATIONS

The Licencing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report to Members. The purpose of the report was for Members to decide the next course of action in regard to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Testing at the Crossgate depot.

The report gave Members two recommendations:

- I. Note the contents of the report and make no changes to the current policy on vehicle compliance and safety inspections. Inspections will continue to be undertaken by Crossgates Depot as currently provided.
- II. Consider and approve a six-week consultation period with relevant stakeholders to consider outsourcing compliance and safety inspections for Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

Officers highlighted the history of the subject detailed in the report which was first raised by Members in 2023 following concerns raised by the taxi trade regarding vehicle testing slot availability. Following a number of reports made to Members the following had been implemented by Officers.

- The removal of the retest fee if undertaken within 10 working days. With a half price fee after 10 working days.
- Testing slots had been reviewed, and one of the slots reserved for retesting only had been reclassified to be available for a full safety inspection test. This was due to the retesting slots often going unused.
- Face to face visits had been organised by Members to view the depot and speak to the Taxi Engineers.

Officers detailed that prior to 2011, Redditch permitted two garages to perform safety inspections, however, following serious concerns raised as to the quality of the inspections, the Licencing Committee took the decision to move the safety vehicle inspections to be performed at the council owned facility at Crossgates depot. It was further detailed that Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove also performed their inspections at a Council owned/operated facility. Malvern and Worcester City performed inspections at a few approved garages. Wychavon allowed a recent MOT to serve as the safety inspection, however, they were undertaking a consultation to procure a number of garaged to undertake the inspections in the future.

Having their own garage permitted licencing officers' easier access to facilitate enforcement evenings as they were able to direct vehicles to go to the garage for an immediate inspection. Officers

further commented that the engineers also had good up to date working knowledge of the Councils' licencing Policy which would not likely be replicated at an external garage. Additionally, no complaints regarding testing slot availability had been made to directly to Officers at the garage or through WRS.

Following questions from Members, Officers clarified that it was the safety vehicle inspection which was being considered and that a Driver was free to have their MOT performed at any garage, however, as the safety inspection already encompassed all the MOT criteria (with additional items), the engineers usually performed the safety inspection and MOT at the same time.

Members were very supportive of the work that Crossgates depot performed and noted that they were very impressed with the work of the engineers, and their knowledge of the taxi licencing policy exhibited during Member visits to the depot. Simon's work in particular was noted, as he had performed a large proportion of the reports that went before Members at the Licencing Sub-Committee meetings.

Members were strongly in support of the work the depot was undertaking, some expressed a concern that if it was outsourced it could impact the safety of the traveling public. Although Members were generally content with the work being done, they also expressed a desire for the Taxi Trade to be consulted before a decision was made.

Following discussion with Members, Officers suggested that they could seek feedback from the trade via a questionnaire. Members supported this but requested that the capability be explored for drivers to send their feedback anonymously to WRS. Members were also informed that they would be able to revisit the matter at a future meeting if it was deemed necessary.

Officers clarified the next steps if Members decided to go with option II in that there would be a 6-week consultation period, after which the results would come back before Members to decide if it would go to procurement. Officers further clarified that the consultation would be to identify if there was a desire for garages to undertake the work and therefore, if there was no interest the matter could not go out to procurement. If it was decided to go to procurement, the service would be outsourced based on a specification which would need to be satisfied by the service provider. Once the specification was decided and a supplier(s) had been identified it could not be amended and the Council would lose control of the cost and its implementation.

After thorough debate, both recommendations were proposed and seconded by Members and were considered in full. On being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED that**

**Members noted the contents of the report and made no changes to the current policy on vehicle compliance and safety inspections, nor the current supplier.**

**6. DEREGULATION ACT 2015**

The Licencing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report to Members. The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the Deregulation act 2015 and the limitations it imposed.

Officers detailed that the Act permitted a Private Hire Vehicle Licence holder to obtain their licence from any suitable licencing Authority and operate anywhere in the Country. The only exception under the Act was the Greater London area which was maintained by Transport for London (TFL).

The Act opened up the possibility for authorities to obtain a much greater number of licence holders that was previously feasible. Due to initial investments by some authorities to automate their systems and presenting an attractive environment for Private Hire Licence Holders, some authorities such as Wolverhampton City Council were able to attract a greater number of drivers. The larger number of drivers further reduced the licencing fees for drivers due to economies of scale.

Officers clarified that for a Hackney Carriage licence it was still necessary to apply with the authority where they wished to operate, however, with the increase in smartphone prevalence, there had been a large reduction in the use of the traditional taxi rank, as the general public were able to book a nearby Taxi on apps such as Uber further exacerbating the problem.

The difficulties for enforcement were detailed in that a Licencing Officer was not able to stop a vehicle licenced by another authority. Therefore, there was a reliance on enforcement teams employed by the licenced authority to undertake the necessary work. Additionally, it was not legally possible under the Act to limit competition or the operation of vehicles licenced elsewhere.

Officers commented that the number of drivers licenced by Redditch Borough Council had remained consistent over the past few years and that there was some work by the Comms team to

promote driving for Redditch Borough Council. Officers further clarified that there was a white paper which was being drafted which may potentially look at a similar system to TFL, however there no details had been released.

Members thanked Officers for the information, and the report was noted.

### **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

Following the recent vehicles brought before the Licencing Taxi Sub-Committee, Members noted that the durability of vehicles was much better than it was 20 years ago. Therefore, Members asked that a review of the Taxi Licencing Policy be added onto the work programme to determine if any changes were required.

After comments from Members, the following details were suggested to be included in the report.

- Stats on the age of the fleet
- How may vehicles ware outside of policy
- The types of the vehicles on the fleet (electric/petrol etc)
- Details on criteria for both new vehicles and renewals

### **8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

#### **RESOLVED that**

Under S100 A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public were excluded on the grounds of the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 of the said act, as amended.

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

Restricted minutes.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.50 pm

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