

## **MINUTE EXTRACT**

### **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 and Hazel Powell

### **Democratic Services Officers:**

Mat Sliwinski

#### **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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.04 pm  
and closed at 7.58 pm