

Licensing Committee – Meeting held on Wednesday 11th February, 2026.

Present:- Councillors Satti (Chair), Mohammad (Vice-Chair), E. Ahmed, Dhillon, Mohindra, Naveed, Parmar and W. Sabah

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors I. Ahmed, Akram and Bedi

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Nazir and Tomar

PART 1

6. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Item 5 - Review of Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy

Councillor E. Ahmed declared that he had been contacted by several members from the trade but had not commented on the matter.

Councillor Naveed declared that he held a TfL licence.

Councillor Sabah declared he attended a meeting with the PHD association/trade in November 2025.

Councillor Satti declared that he was a trustee of Pakistani Welfare Association (PWA) and that two of the trade representatives speaking at the meeting were also trustees at PWA. Councillor Satti also declared that he held a TfL licence.

All councillors remained in the meeting and participated in the consideration of this item.

7. Guidance on Predetermination/ Predisposition - To Note

All Members confirmed that they had read and understood the guidance on predetermination and predisposition.

8. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 2 July 2025

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

9. Non-Executive (Licensing) Fees and Charges 2026/27

The Committee received a report which set out details of fees and charges for non-executive functions falling within the remit of the Licensing Committee where the council could levy a charge. The fees and charges were costed to ensure full cost recovery, or charged in accordance with the relevant legislation as set out in Appendix A.

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The Principal Licensing Officer reminded Members that the fees for non-executive functions were set at the cost for providing the function, save where otherwise permitted or prescribed by legislation, and in some cases, there was legislative provisions setting out the methodology and use that can be made of such fees. It was noted that some fees were set by central government, and these could not be changed by the Committee. The charges proposed and the legislative basis for the changes in fees were outlined within Appendix A.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillors Akram and I Ahmed addressed the Committee and expressed concern regarding the magnitude of proposed increases in fees for the taxi trade; stating that good governance required meaningful engagement with those affected and that the proposed fees as presented to the committee appeared to be punitive and not fair to the trade.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised several questions which included how often the fees were reviewed and what consultation had been carried out including whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had been conducted. It was noted that although fees were reviewed annually, a proper review had not been undertaken since 2015 and the proposed fees in the appendix to the report were reflective of the accurate costs of administering the services.

It was explained that a proper process had been followed for the review of the fees and charges which included conducting an EIA, which was included within the report. There was no requirement for a consultation to have taken place, with notice to be given of the changes taking place, which if approved would be implemented from April 2026.

A number of members stated that whilst the principle of cost recovery was accepted, proposed fee increases needed to be reasonable and proportionate and broadly in line with what was being charged by neighbouring local authorities. It was explained that the fees reflected how much it cost to administer the service and therefore there couldn't be a direct comparison of fees with neighbouring local authorities.

Concern was expressed at the proposed fee increases, noting that some were being significantly increased and that this would place a financial strain on drivers who were already struggling with the cost-of-living prices. In response to why the trade were being charged to cover salary costs for officers, it was explained that the charges applied were for the cost of administering that whole service and was not specifically paying for officer's salaries.

Chair of the Private Hire Drivers Association addressed the Committee, stating that a decline in footfall had resulted in a reduced income for drivers. It was submitted that the trade was not receiving a value for money service from the licensing service as it was often difficult to speak to members of the team especially given that a front of house service no longer operated.

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The recommendations as set out in the report were put to the vote and not agreed. The Director Public Health and Public Protection reminded the Committee that fees and charges were an integral part of the budget setting process and likely to have budgetary implications if not agreed. It was agreed that the meeting be adjourned to allow Members to consider which, if any, fees and charges as outlined in Appendix A could be agreed and which required further information relating to cost recovery to be submitted to the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 7.45pm and re-convened at 8.05pm.

It was formally proposed and seconded that the fees and charges for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix A, be approved except for fees relating to Private Hire Operators Licence – New 1 Year and Renewal 1 vehicle only, 1 year. It was requested that a breakdown of details relating to cost recovery for providing this service be submitted to a future meeting.

Resolved -

- a) That the fees for non-executive functions, set out in Appendix A to the report, for the year 2026/27 be approved; except for fees relating to Private Hire Operators Licence – New 1 Year and Renewal 1 vehicle only, 1 year.
- b) That the proposed fees relating to Private Hire Operators Licence – New 1 Year and Renewal 1 vehicle only, 1 year be brought back for consideration to a future meeting.

10. Review of Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy

The Director Public Health and Public protection set out details of the report advising the Committee of the findings of a review of the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy (the Vehicle Policy), which was undertaken in November 2025.

The Committee was reminded that the 2018 Vehicle Policy was amended in October 2023 following a full and detailed review and consultation. The 2023 Vehicle Policy set out milestones to move the fleet to less polluting fuels in Slough. The amended vehicle policy balanced the environmental impact of combustible engines and the requirements on the Council to put measures in place to address poor air quality. It was noted that the 2023 revisions lessened the impact of the original policy on the trade.

The current policy, as approved in 2023, stated that from 1 January 2026 new taxi grant applications must be non-diesel fuelled, and from 1 January 2027 new taxi grant applications must be an alternative to both diesel and petrol/mild hybrid. The vehicle policy maintained the requirement that diesel, petrol and mild hybrid vehicles could be renewed each year until they are 9

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years old (standard vehicle) and a new vehicle being licensed can be up to 5 years old. No changes were being proposed to the age of vehicles to be licensed.

It was acknowledged that support to the trade to help with the transition choices had been delayed in its implementation, however EV infrastructure continued to be implemented across the borough. It was brought to Members attention that a plan to deliver the DEFRA grant by the Carbon & Sustainability team had been put together, details of which were appended to the report.

It was highlighted that the Licensing Committee had at its meeting in October 2024, recommended the 2024 - 2028 Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to full Council, stating that they were supportive in principle of further measures to improve air quality as it was a significant public health issue. Focus of the Air Quality Action Plan was on reducing pollution from traffic and specifically referred to the 2023 Vehicle Policy as a component of the Plan.

It was submitted that the Committee, having reviewed the report and representations made by the trade, support officer's recommendation as set out in the report, namely that no changes are made to the 2023 policy and for it to be continued in its implementation.

The Chair invited representatives from both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver organisations to address the meeting, and the following points were raised:

- Concern was expressed that the taxi trade was being disproportionately targeted with regards to reducing air pollution and queried what measures were being taken to ensure that the trading estate was contributing to efforts in reducing air pollution.
- It was requested that the policy be amended to 2030 which would allow struggling drivers a reasonable lead in time to make the necessary changes.
- Drivers received a poor service from the licensing department, often not being able to speak to officers directly.
- The vehicle age be changed from 9 years to 12 years which would bring it in line with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead policy.
- Despite the council being awarded funding from DEFRA, drivers had not received any assistance.

Councillor Akram spoke under Rule 30 stating that the council, despite having grant funding, had not provided any financial assistance to drivers in making the transition to electric vehicles. A 2030 cut off for diesel vehicles was preferred which would allow a reasonable transition period for the trade.

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Councillor I Ahmed also addressed the Committee under Rule 30, stating that the trade should not be held accountable for singularly improving air quality in Slough and requested that the policy be amended to allow diesel vehicles to operate until 2030.

Committee Members considered details of the report, and it was queried as to why DEFRA grant funding had not been utilised. The Principal Environment Officer explained that due to capacity and resource constraints in 2021, there had been significant delay in delivery of the project. However, it was anticipated that the scheme would commence in 2026 and a detailed project plan was attached at Appendix D to the report. It was clarified that the grant had been awarded for specific usage, i.e. to run a project supporting the licenced vehicle trade in transitioning to cleaner vehicles. A condition of the grant being awarded was that it could not be used to provide financial assistance to drivers to offset the cost of any new vehicle. Delivery of this project would directly support the aims of the AQAP 2024-2028.

Several Members expressed concern that the overall contribution from trade vehicles towards air pollution was relatively minimal when compared to that from the trading estate or other factors such as Heathrow and that the trade were being unfairly targeted. It was proposed that the policy be amended to allow the licensing of diesel vehicles until 2030 and petrol vehicles until 2031, which would allow the council to assist the trade and ensure that the infrastructure to support an increase in electric vehicles across the borough was in place. It was also proposed that the vehicle age policy be amended from the current requirement of vehicles no older than 9 years to no older than 12 years.

A number of Members stated that it was a collective responsibility to improve the air quality in the town and that diesel vehicles needed to be phased out. Responding to what potential impact a reversal of the policy would have on the AQAP, the Director of Public Health and Public Protection reminded the Committee that it had agreed to adopt the AQAP in 2023 and changing the policy would reverse that commitment. Direct implications of changes in policy would require additional modelling by the environmental team and could cost in circa of £60k.

Resolved:

- a) That the 2023 Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy (the Vehicle Policy) be amended to allow for the licensing of diesel vehicles until 2030 and petrol vehicles until 2031.
- b) That diesel, petrol and mild hybrid vehicles can be renewed each year until they are 12 years old.

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- c) That no change be made to the licensing of wheelchair accessible vehicles i.e. they continue to be licensed until 17 years old.

11. Members Attendance Record 2025/26

Resolved – That details of the Members Attendance Record 2025/26 be noted.

12. Date of Next Meeting - 9th March 2026

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.33 pm)