

Notice of Meeting



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Licensing Committee

Tuesday 24 March 2026 at 5.00 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

This meeting will be streamed live here: [Link to Licensing Committee broadcasts.](#)

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Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday 16 March 2026

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Thomas.Radbourne1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk



Agenda - Licensing Committee to be held on Tuesday 24 March 2026 (continued)

To: Councillors Jeremy Cottam (Chairman), Paul Dick (Vice-Chairman), Phil Barnett, Billy Drummond, Nigel Foot, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, Tom McCann, David Marsh, Stephanie Steevenson, Clive Taylor and Martha Vickers

Agenda

Part I	Page No.
1. Apologies To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	
2. Minutes	5 - 12
3. Declarations of Interest To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct .	
4. Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's Fees	13 - 24
5. Consultation on Protected Plates and Accessibility	25 - 32
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Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Executive Director – Resources

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Thomas Radbourne on telephone (01635) 519 502.

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2025

Councillors Present: Jeremy Cottam (Chairman), Paul Dick (Vice-Chairman), Phil Barnett, Billy Drummond, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, David Marsh, Stephanie Steevenson, Clive Taylor and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Julia O'Brien (Principal Licensing Officer) and Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), Mark Groves (Lead Licensing Enforcement Officer) and Moira Fraser (Principal Officer - Policy & Governance)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Nigel Foot and Councillor Tom McCann

PART I

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2025 were approved as a true and correct record.

Councillor Paul Dick noted that it was suggested at the previous meeting that the Chairman meet with the appropriate officer regarding licensing enforcement. Councillor Jeremy Cottam advised that he was happy to do this.

Councillor Billy Drummond highlighted that he had asked a question at the previous meeting around residents choosing slow EV charging points and had not had an answer. Moira Fraser advised that she had asked the environmental team but had not yet heard back.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

3. Licensing Fees and Charges 2026/27

Sean Murphy introduced the report on licensing fees and charges (Agenda Item 4). He explained that the paper focused on the setting of discretionary fees for Public Protection Services, which was a shared service across two authorities and would soon include a third. The fees were based on an hourly rate, currently set at £74 per hour, reflecting a 7.2% increase from the previous year. The report also noted that statutory fees, particularly those under the Licensing Act 2003, had not increased since their introduction and were approximately 70% below inflation.

Sean Murphy further clarified the methodology for calculating fees, including the inclusion of support service recharges and the impact of external inspection costs, particularly for animal establishments, which were currently conducted by the City of London. He noted efforts to recruit and train an in-house inspector to reduce costs.

LICENSING COMMITTEE - 3 NOVEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

Councillor Stephanie Steevenson expressed concern that statutory fees had not increased since 2007, describing the situation as unacceptable and highlighting that the Council was comparatively inexpensive. She supported the move to in-house inspections and emphasised the need for fees to cover costs.

Councillor Jeremy Cottam confirmed that a previous letter regarding statutory fees had been sent to the Local Government Authority and relevant ministers but had not received a response. He proposed that officers draft a similar letter to local MPs to urge a review of statutory fees.

Sean Murphy explained that the lack of increase in statutory fees had resulted in budget pressures, requiring cuts in other service areas. He noted that while some sectors faced challenges, others could have afforded higher fees, but the Council was legally unable to cross-subsidise between sectors.

Councillor Phil Barnett queried the calculation of fees for riding establishments, noting variations in the percentage increase. Moira Fraser confirmed that the differences were due to rounding.

Councillor Clive Taylor asked about the high hedges fee under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, seeking clarification on who paid the fee. Sean Murphy responded that the fee was paid by the complainant, and Moira Fraser added that the high fee reflected the cost of specialist inspections.

Councillor Paul Kander queried the meaning of asterisks on certain fees and was informed by Moira Fraser that these previously indicated discounts for electric and hybrid vehicles, which had been removed.

Councillor Kander also questioned whether the Council could introduce a statutory top-up fee to cover costs. Councillor Cottam and Sean Murphy explained that statutory fees were set by central government, and the Council was not permitted to add additional charges or cross-subsidise.

Councillor Martha Vickers asked whether other local authorities were in a similar position, and Councillor Cottam confirmed that the issue had been discussed at the Joint Public Protection Committee.

RESOLVED that the Licensing Committee:

- Is informed about the 2026/27 fees and charges detailed in Appendix A.
- Agrees that the fees for Private Hire Operators and Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licence fees are subjected to the statutory consultation period as described in paragraph 4.9.

4. Feedback from the Taxi Trade Meeting

Moira Fraser introduced the report on the taxi trade meeting, noting that the document had been circulated in the supplementary pack due to the timing of meetings. She explained that the Council typically met with the taxi trade twice a year, in January and October, to discuss relevant issues and policy changes, with meetings scheduled around the fee setting cycle.

Moira Fraser reported that the trade raised several areas for discussion. It was advised that the lead applications officer within the Public Protection Partnership had begun

LICENSING COMMITTEE - 3 NOVEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

compiling the registers. The trade requested additional information to be included, and after cleansing the data, the revised registers were anticipated to be published by the end of the month.

Moira Fraser stated that the trade also raised the issue of fare increases. The trade indicated a desire to review fares but noted that the taxi policy needed to be set first to understand the implications. She also confirmed that the trade requested a review of the list of authorised garages. One garage had indicated it no longer wished to undertake taxi checks, and the trade had identified another company interested in providing this service. Mark Groves, Licensing Enforcement Lead Officer, had contacted the replacement garage, and the Council would also write to other local garages to gauge interest, subject to relevant checks.

Moira Fraser addressed concerns raised by the trade regarding the Council’s website. The trade found it confusing to be redirected from the West Berkshire website to the Public Protection Partnership website. The Digital Services Team had added a note to the West Berkshire licensing page to clarify this. The trade also expressed concerns about having to use the Bracknell Forest website for online payments. She noted that there was not a quick fix for this issue.

Moira Fraser further reported that communication was discussed, and officers were set to meet to plan the next newsletter which was planned to be issued every two months.

Councillor Stephanie Steevenson commented that the criticisms of the website were distinct issues. She emphasised the importance of providing an online payment facility and highlighted the need for adequate resources to support efficient operations, including the reinstatement of the newsletter.

Councillor Paul Dick clarified that online payment was possible, but the issue was the appearance of the Bracknell name. Greater clarification was needed.

Councillor Dick also reflected on the positive progress made at the recent meeting with the trade, noting that the bimonthly newsletter and other improvements were well received.

RESOLVED that: the Committee noted the report.

5. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

(The meeting commenced at 16:30 and closed at 17:09)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

LICENSING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15 DECEMBER 2025

Councillors Present: Jeremy Cottam (Chairman), Phil Barnett, Billy Drummond, Nigel Foot, Paul Kander, Tom McCann, David Marsh, Stephanie Steevenson, Clive Taylor and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Julia O'Brien (Principal Licensing Officer), Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection) Riley Timney (Lead Licensing Applications Officer), Benjamin Ryan and Sam Chiverton (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Dick and Councillor Jane Langford

PART I

1. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

2. **Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 3) concerning the Council's draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. Mr Sean Murphy introduced the report by first thanking the taxi trade for their significant contribution to the redrafting of the policy and apologising for the delay in getting the policy to the Committee. Mr Murphy further explained the process that the policy had gone through, the changes made to the draft version of the policy and the controversial parts of the policy for the trade.

The Chairman proposed to suspend standing orders to allow the taxi trade to speak and this was seconded by Councillor Billy Drummond.

The proposal was put to a vote and passed.

Standing Orders Suspended

The taxi trade was given ten minutes to provide their representation. A recording of their representation can be found here - [Special Licensing Committee - Monday 15th December 2025 - 12:50](#)

After the taxi trade had spoken the Chairman proposed to reinstate standing orders, which was seconded by Councillor Drummond.

The proposal was put to a vote and passed.

Standing Orders Reinstated

Councillor David Marsh queried when the policy would be implemented. He expressed the need to find a balance between those who used protected plates and those who did not. He had reservations about passing a policy that was not fully completed.

LICENSING COMMITTEE - 15 DECEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

Mr Murphy explained that the policy would allow for some transitional implementation dates so as not to adversely affect the taxi trade. He agreed that the protected plates issue was complicated; however, the report allowed for that section of the policy to be assessed and implemented by summer 2026. It was noted that it was up to the Committee to decide whether to agree the policy in advance of the receipt of the legal advice on this matter.

Ms Julia O'Brien stated that the licensing team was awaiting legal advice on the protected plate issues raised by the trade.

Mr Murphy further explained that the policy would come into effect once agreed, but there would be an annual review, and the team would discuss transitional arrangements with the trade.

The Chairman expressed the importance of having a policy, not only to protect the public but also to support the trade. He outlined the recommendations set out in the report.

Mr Murphy added that the typographical error relating to Certificates of Insurance would be amended in the final policy.

Councillor Tom McCann stressed that the policy was not the final product but a step forward, highlighting the built-in flexibility.

Councillor Phil Barnett questioned whether the policy could be tweaked, and the Chairman confirmed that it would include an implementation timetable for Committee review.

Councillor Clive Taylor stated that he was uncomfortable adopting a policy that was not completely finalised.

Councillor Martha Vickers asked about timeframes for consulting with the trade on the protected plates issue. The Chairman explained that a meeting was scheduled for 6 January 2026 to discuss the matter.

Councillor Stephanie Steevenson believed that the policy needed to be adopted, as delaying could result in it never being adopted, and she pointed to the future flexibility of the policy as a positive.

Councillor Paul Kander queried when the legal team was expected to provide feedback on the protected plates policy. Councillor McCann stated that he would speak to the Head of Legal to try to find a solution.

Councillor Kander argued that having a policy was better than having none and asked when the review would start. Mr Murphy explained that the review would begin in the new year.

The Chairman proposed adopting the recommendations set out in the report, with the inclusion of the amendment of the text around insurance certificates. This was seconded by Councillor Drummond.

The proposal was put to a vote and duly passed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

1. **APPROVED** the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy set out at Annex A to the report.
2. **DELEGATED** authority to the Service Lead – Public Protection, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee, to agree any transitional arrangements to bring about effective implementation.

LICENSING COMMITTEE - 15 DECEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

3. **DELEGATED** authority to the Service Lead – Public Protection, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee, to make any minor revisions to the policy arising from future changes to the Department for Transport Guidance and any relevant changes to legislation.
4. **WOULD RECEIVE** an update on implementation as part of the Annual Report along with any proposed updates or changes to the policy.
5. **AGREED** to undertake a review of the application of the policy with respect to 'protected plates' (Section 20 of Appendix C) within the next six months with a view to implementing any changes proposed at the time of the first annual review.

(The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm and closed at 5.18 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Outcome of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Operators and Vehicle Licence Fees Consultation - 2025

Background

In accordance with [Section 70 \(1\) of the Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#) the Council is required to undertake a statutory 28-day consultation when variations to hackney carriage and private hire operators and vehicle licence fees are proposed.

The proposed fees for 2026/27 were discussed at the Joint Public Protection Committee meeting held on the [06 October 2025](#). The Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) is required by the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) that set up the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) shared service to recommend a draft set of fees and charges to all the member councils which includes West Berkshire Council.

At the meeting of the Joint Public Protection Committee in December 2017 it was agreed that as a matter of principle all fees and charges should be set on the basis of full cost recovery.

West Berkshire Council's Licensing Committee considered the proposed fees at a meeting held on Monday, [03 November 2025](#).

The Licensing Committee agreed that save for the, hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and private hire operator's fees, all other fees would go forward for consideration as part of the council's fee setting process, with the final determination to be made at the Full Council meeting on Thursday, [26 February 2026](#)

The hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and private hire operator's fees would be subjected to the statutory consultation process.

It was proposed to increase the hourly rate from £69p/h to £74h for 2026/27 (increase of 7.2%) The proposed 2026/27 statutory fees that we consulted on are set out below:

Hackney Carriage (Taxi) and Private Hire Vehicle Licence

Hackney carriage vehicle new / renewal	£333/£296
Private hire vehicle new / renewal	£333/£296
Private hire vehicle with dispensation new/ renewal	£333/£296
Temporary Vehicle Licence (issued up to 3 months Maximum)	£296

Private Hire Operator Licence

Private hire operator licence		
Number of vehicles	New	Renewal
1	£555.00	£407.00
2	£647.50	£499.50
3	£740.00	£592.00
4	£832.50	£684.50
5	£925.00	£777.00
6	£1,017.50	£869.50
7	£1,110.00	£962.00
8	£1,202.50	£1,054.50
9	£1,295.00	£1,147.00
10	£1,387.50	£1,239.50
11	£1,480.00	£1,332.00
12	£1,572.50	£1,424.50
13	£1,665.00	£1,517.00
14	£1,757.50	£1,609.50
15	£1,850.00	£1,702.00
16	£1,942.50	£1,794.50

17	£2,035.00	£1,887.00
18	£2,127.50	£1,979.50
19	£2,220.00	£2,072.00
20	£2,312.50	£2,164.50
20+	£2,312.50	£2,164.50
Variation to licence	£74	£74

Who and How we Consulted

- a) The consultation period ran from 06 November 2025 to 04 December 2025.
- b) A public notice pertaining to the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operators fees was placed in the Newbury Weekly News on the 06 November 2025.
- c) A consultation letter was posted to all Taxi and Private Hire Drivers and Private Hire Operators in the District.
- d) A copy of the consultation was posted on the Public Protection Partnership website, on the West Berkshire Council Consultation Hub and in the reception area at the Market Street Offices on the 06 November 2025.
- e) The consultation was supported by a press release on 06 November 2025 and social media posts on the 06 November 2025.

What you Told Us

We received two responses to the consultation during the consultation period, both from residents. We thank the residents that took the time to respond and note that these responses both relate to fares and not fees. The Council did not receive any objections or comments from the trade on the fees.

The responses are set out below.

<p>Comment</p> <p>Response 1: Resident</p> <p>Good morning,</p> <p>I'm a 77yr old woman, a carer for my husband who is housebound. He can no longer drive, and I am unable to drive. So, we have sold our car.</p>
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I've had to take a taxi on occasions where I can't use a bus for transport. The costs are already extortionate using a taxi and now WBC are increasing the fares. Absolutely disgusting. E.g. taxi from C Close [Thatcham Address], Thatcham to Wickes, Hambridge Road. Nearly £9. This was in the late morning.

Response 2: Resident

I understand that our charges need to be higher than average due to the rural nature of the area. However, as a frequent user of the service, almost exclusively within 3miles of home and within Newbury/ Thatcham borders I feel that the increase in charges will adversely affect me and those like me as we continue to subsidise the more rural routes in the area.

Could consideration be made for a base fee that is higher for rural areas to reflect the additional distance drivers have to go for pick up and that difference to reduce or maintain the base fee for those going short distance within built up areas. This will hit my purse very hard and as I am unable to drive, live alone and am physically disabled I feel disadvantaged by any decision to increase fares by such a large percentage.

What Happens Next?

Section 70 (1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 sets out the requirements when variations to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and private hire operator's fees are proposed. This legislation also prescribes the statutory consultation process that must be followed and the procedures for ensuring that objections are properly considered.

Members agreed at the 03 November 2025 Licensing Committee that if any objections to the hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and private hire operator's fees were received, they be considered by the Committee at the meeting on [19 January 2026](#) and that any ensuing changes would then be recommended to full Council for approval. Council will discuss and agree the fees and charges at the meeting on 26 February 2026.

As no objections have been received, officers will report the outcome of the consultation to the Members of the Licensing Committee at the 24 March 2026 Licensing Committee. The fees were presented to Full Council and were adopted at the [26 February 2026](#) Council meeting and will now come into effect on the 01 April 2026.

Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator’s Fees

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	24 March 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Tom McCann
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	LC

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To note that as no objections to the proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator’s Fees were received during the statutory 28 day consultation period they were recommended to full Council for approval without modification where they were adopted.

2 Recommendation

The Licensing Committee is asked to:

2.1 **NOTE** the comments received during the statutory consultation on variations to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle and private hire operator’s fees as set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>Discretionary fees and charges relating to licences and registrations are based on cost recovery, and should they not reflect the cost of providing the service, there is a risk of generating a surplus or deficit.</p> <p>All costs associated with running the consultation via public notice was met from within existing budgets.</p>
Human Resource:	<p>There are no human resources implications associated with the consultation. The consultation was undertaken within existing resources within the PPP and the Recruitment, Consultation and Performance Team.</p>

Implication	Commentary
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>Fees for vehicle and operators' licences</p> <p>s.70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976: "...a district council may charge such fees for the grant of vehicle and operators' licences as may be resolved by them from time to time and as may be sufficient in the aggregate to cover in whole or in part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the reasonable cost of the carrying out by or on behalf of the district council of inspections of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles for the purpose of determining whether any such licence should be granted or renewed; (b) the reasonable cost of providing hackney carriage stands; and (c) any reasonable administrative or other costs in connection with the foregoing and with the control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles." <p>The licensing costs recoverable by a district authority in respect of vehicles and operators is limited to vehicle inspection costs for the specific purpose of determining their suitability to be licensed, reasonable cost of providing hackney carriage stands, reasonable administration costs for processing the licence application and finally reasonable costs associated with "...control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles."</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>The fees are potentially subject to legal challenge. It is therefore important that the fees and methodology are subject to ongoing review.</p>
<p>Property:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Policy:</p>	<p>The Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) is required every autumn to propose a budget to partner authorities. This includes proposals in relation to discretionary fees and charges. The individual authorities are then required to make their own decisions in relation to the fees.</p> <p>It is not the role of this Committee to set the fees for 2026/27 as this is a function of the Full Council. The Committee is being asked to note the comments made in relation to the operators and vehicle licence fees received during the statutory consultation for information only.</p>

Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's Fees

Implication	Commentary			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:		✓		No evident contribution to inequality The income received from licence applicants covers the cost of providing the statutory licensing function.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		No impact
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		No impact
Environmental Impact:		✓		No impact
Health Impact:		✓		No impact
ICT Impact:		✓		No impact
Digital Services Impact:		✓		This information will be included on the Public Protection Partnership Website using existing resources.
Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			This work is business as usual within the service.

Implication	Commentary			
Core Business:		✓		This work is business as usual within the service.
Data Impact:		✓		No impact
Consultation and Engagement:	Members of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade as well as members of the public, Councillors and service users were consulted on the statutory fees as is required by the legislation. This was enabled via emails directly to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licence holders and Private Hire Operators, a public notice in the Newbury Weekly News, a notice placed in Market Street Reception window and a consultation notice added to the Public Protection Partnership website and the West Berkshire Council website for the mandatory 28 day consultation period.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The JPPC is required by the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) that set up the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) shared service, to recommend a draft set of fees and charges to each of the member Councils (Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire) annually. The proposed fees for 2026/27 were discussed at the JPPC meeting held on Monday, [06 October 2025](#) where it was proposed to increase the hourly rate that the fees are based on by 7.2% from £69per hour to £74 per hour. The increase reflects the increase to the cost base which includes salary related costs (including those not budgeted for in the 2025/26 hourly rate e.g. the higher than budgeted for pay settlement) along with support service recharge increases.
- 4.2 These fees were then presented to the Licensing Committee at the [03 November 2025 meeting](#). The Committee agreed that, save for the private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees, the discretionary fees go forward for consideration as part of the Council fee setting process.
- 4.3 The Committee also agreed that the fees for private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees be subjected to a twenty eight day statutory consultation period. Due to the Licensing Committee meeting being postponed in January the fees were presented to Full Council for approval. The fees were agreed by Full Council and will now come into effect on the 01 April 2026. This report serves to update the Committee on the consultation only.
- 4.4 The proposed 2026/27 fees subjected to the statutory consultation are set out below:

Hackney Carriage (Taxi) and Private Hire Vehicle Licence

Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's Fees

Hackney carriage vehicle new / renewal	£333/£296
Private hire vehicle new / renewal	£333/£296
Private hire vehicle with dispensation new/ renewal	£333/£296
Temporary Vehicle Licence (issued up to 3 months Maximum)	£296

Private Hire Operator Licence

Private hire operator licence		
Number of vehicles	New	Renewal
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Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's Fees

19	£2,220.00	£2,072.00
20	£2,312.50	£2,164.50
20+	£2,312.50	£2,164.50
Variation to licence	£74	£74

4.5 Who and How we Consulted

- The consultation period ran from 06 November 2025 to 04 December 2025.
- A public notice was placed in the Newbury Weekly News on the 06 November 2025.
- A consultation letter was posted to all Taxi and Private Hire Drivers and Private Hire Operators in the District.
- A copy of the consultation was posted on the Public Protection Partnership website, on the West Berkshire Council Consultation Hub and in the reception area at the Market Street Offices on the 06 November 2025.
- The consultation was supported by a press release and social media post on the 06 November 2025.

4.6 Two responses to the consultation were received, both from residents. The Council did not receive any objections or comments from the trade on the fees.

4.7 Both responses received related to tariffs and not to fees.

4.8 At both the October 2025 and January 2026 Taxi Trade meetings the trade commented that they did not believe that all of the fees accurately reflected the time taken to process them. An example that was cited was that the trade believed it took longer than four hours to process a Temporary Vehicle Licence. Officers confirmed that time recording was being improved and this was reviewed on an annual basis.

4.9 The trade also commented at these meetings that they would like to see more enforcement officers in post and that they understood that this would increase fees. Officers agreed to look into this option.

4.10 As no objections to the statutory consultation were received the fees were presented to Full Council on the 26 February 2026 where they were adopted with effect from the 01 April 2026.

5 Other options considered

5.1 There are no alternative options, as the consideration of the objections and setting of the fees are legal requirements as outlined above.

6 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A – Outcome of the Consultation Document.

Background Papers:

[Section 70\(1\) of the Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

Name: Moira Fraser
Job Title: Policy and Governance Officer
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Consultation on Protected Plates and Accessibility

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	24 March 2026
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Tom McCann
Report Author:	Julia O'Brien
Forward Plan Ref:	N/a

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline the proposed timetable and methodology for consulting on potential amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy in respect of the matter of 'protected plates' (Section 20 of Appendix C) following the adoption of the policy at the 15 December 2025 Licensing Committee meeting.
- 1.2 To discuss and amend the proposals for the 'protected plate' consultation as outlined in the report.

2 Recommendations

The Licensing Committee:

- 2.1 **AGREES** that the 'protected plate' consultation on Hackney Carriage vehicles be carried out as described in [paragraphs 5](#).
- 2.2 **AGREES** that the results of the consultation be brought back to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee where Members will consider amendments in respect of protected plates, if any are needed, as set out in the current policy including any implementation dates.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>The costs of producing this report and running the consultation exercise will be met from within the existing Public Protection Partnership budgets.</p> <p>Discretionary fees and charges relating to licences and registrations are based on cost recovery, and should they not</p>

	<p>reflect the cost of providing the service, there is a risk of generating a surplus or deficit.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>There are no HR implications associated with the production of this report or the proposed consultation on the ‘protected plate’ matter in the policy. The consultation will be undertaken by existing resources within the Public Protection Service advised by colleagues in the Performance, Research and Risk Team.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>West Berkshire District Council is acting within the rights of a local authority to establish a comprehensive taxi and private hire licensing policy. In doing so, the Council has a duty to protect the public, uphold safety standards, and support a professional and accountable transport service.</p> <p>While national legislation and statutory guidance provide minimum requirements, it is both lawful and appropriate for licensing authorities to adopt higher standards where justified, particularly where these are shaped by meaningful consultation and democratic oversight, both of which have taken place in the development of this policy.</p> <p>This policy is firmly grounded in the historic and statutory framework that governs taxi licensing, including the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. It also aligns with more recent legislation, including the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022.</p> <p>In addition to these core statutes, the policy recognises broader legal responsibilities, including those under data protection, immigration, equalities, criminal records disclosure, public health, road safety, and transport regulation. These duties have been carefully considered to ensure a licensing framework that is lawful, proportionate, and fit for purpose.</p> <p>In relation to ‘protected plates’ in the policy it was determined to undertake a review of the current position within 6 months of the policy being adopted. The Public Protection Partnership deemed it prudent to instruct Counsel on the matter to ensure the policy is lawful particularly in the light of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The Council remains committed to monitoring and reviewing the policy at appropriate intervals to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, and local needs. This approach ensures that our licensing standards remain legally compliant and but responsive to the evolving needs of our communities.</p>

Risk Management:	<p>The purpose of the licensing regime as set out in the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025 – 2030 is to protect users of taxi and private hire vehicles but also to ensure that those operating within the regime do so on a level playing field. The Council sets those standards locally and it is imperative that there is clarity and that the standards are applied universally. It is also important that those licensed by the Council are consulted on the terms of the licensing arrangements.</p>			
Property:	<p>There are no property implications associated with the drafting of the policy or the consultation that will be undertaken.</p>			
Policy:	<p>In July 2020 the Department for Transport issued new guidance in relation to hackney carriage and private hire licensing namely: “Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards”. This required local authorities to review, revise and update their policies in relation to hackney carriage and private hire licensing which this report seeks to do.</p> <p>The DfT issued revised best practice guidance on the 17 November 2023.</p> <p>The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2030 was approved by the Licensing Committee on 15 December 2025 subject to some minor amendments being delegated to Officers in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The decision was also subject to an agreement to undertake a review of the application of the policy with respect to ‘protected plates’ within the next six months with a view to implementing any changes proposed at the time of the first annual review.</p>			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				

Consultation on Protected Plates and Accessibility

<p>A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?</p>	<p>x</p>			<p>The policy takes cognisance of both the Equalities Act 2010 and the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 which aims to ensure that disabled people can use Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle services with confidence that they will not be discriminated against.</p> <p>Nationally young women are one of the largest groups to use taxis. Other groups, such as those who have a disability and those who are elderly may also use taxis more frequently. Any change to policy suggested could impact these groups. Any comments received in respect of equality matters will be reported back to Members at the July 2026 meeting.</p>
<p>B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?</p>	<p>x</p>			<p>As the document outlines changes to the matters in relation to 'protected plates' it will be consulted on widely with the trade and service users. Any comments on equalities issues raised as part of the consultation will be provided to legal for comment and will be made known to the committee prior to a decision being taken.</p>
<p>Environmental Impact:</p>	<p>x</p>			<p>Any changes to 'protected plate vehicles' will fall under the revised standards which will require vehicles to meet the Euro 6 emissions standards if they are being submitted for grant or renewal of a licence.</p>
<p>Health Impact:</p>		<p>x</p>		<p>There are no specific health impacts associated with the proposed consultation.</p>
<p>ICT Impact:</p>		<p>x</p>		<p>The consultation will be published on the PPP website and the West Berkshire Council website.</p>
<p>Digital Services Impact:</p>		<p>x</p>		<p>The consultation will be published on the PPP website and the West Berkshire Council website.</p>

Council Strategy Priorities:	x			<p>The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy as adopted in December 2025 seeks to deliver on or support the following Council priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling the climate and ecological emergency • A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire • Thriving communities with a strong local voice.
Core Business:		x		<p>The assessing and issuing of licences associated with the taxi trade constitutes business as usual for the licensing authority. Any amendments to the policy as a result of this consultation will provide clear and consistent guidance for all involved in the process.</p>
Data Impact:		x		<p>The policy, which this consultation is part of, sets out how the Council will deal with data and imposes requirements on the trade as to how they need to deal with it.</p>
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>During the forthcoming consultation the taxi and private hire trade, members of the public, taxi and private hire users, disability and accessibility user groups and users, and other interested party, will be invited to answer some questions on the consultation points via the PPP and West Berkshire Council websites or via email or by post.</p> <p>Consultation responses raised will be published on the Council website and the PPP website.</p>			

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The [Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2030](#) was approved by the Licensing Committee on 15 December 2025 subject to some minor amendments being delegated to Officers in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The decision was also subject to an agreement to undertake a review of the application of the policy with respect to ‘protected plates’ within the next six months with a view to implementing any changes proposed at the time of the first annual review.

Consultation on Protected Plates and Accessibility

- 4.2 In line with the decision of the Committee Officers are proposing conducting a public consultation to garner greater understanding of this specific element of the policy.
- 4.3 Prior to 2002 the Council had in place a limit on the number of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences that were issued in the zone that covered the former Borough of Newbury (the 'Town Zone'). The 'District Zone' which covered the remainder of the West Berkshire Council administrative area had no limit applied. In 2002 the Council made the decision to remove the limit on the number of licences that could be issued in the 'Town Zone' but in doing so implemented a condition that all new licences that would be granted for this zone would require the vehicle to be wheelchair accessible. The original vehicle licence holders were given a protection that allowed them to continue to operate saloon vehicles whilst they remained the licence holder. The protection applied to all licences issued prior to the 1st April 2001.
- 4.4 In April 2005 the Licensing Committee considered a proposal to allow the so-called 'protected plates' (the original 'Town Zone' Newbury Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences) to be transferred to immediate family thus creating the so called 'family exemption' along with other proposals. The proposals were adopted. The report and minutes can be found here: [West Berkshire Council - Meeting of Licensing Committee on Tuesday 26 April 2005](#)
- 4.5 The effect of this was to update the Council's Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Conditions as follows:
1. If a taxi proprietor transfers in whole or in part his interest in a hackney carriage proprietor's licence, that transfer shall, subject to the family exemption, be treated as a grant of a new licence for the purpose of the applicability of the disabled access condition. Therefore, the disabled access condition requiring the provision of a fully wheelchair accessible vehicle will be applied to that licence with immediate effect from the date that the licence is transferred.

The Family Exemption

2. Any transfer by a hackney carriage proprietor of an interest in his licence, in whole or part, which is limited to a transfer of such interest to a member of the proprietor's immediate family as defined below, shall not be affected by the disabled access condition to any greater extent than the licence would have been affected had the transfer not occurred. Therefore, upon a transfer to a family member of an interest in a hackney carriage proprietor's licence, the relevant disabled access condition applicable to that licence immediately before the transfer was effected will remain in force.
3. For these purposes, 'immediate family' shall mean the:-
 - Mother or Father
 - Spouse or partner
 - Children
 - Brothers or Sisters
 - Step-Mother or Step-Father
 - Step-Children
 - Step-Brothers or Step-Sisters of the hackney carriage proprietor, but

shall not extend to any additional family member.

4. Where it is claimed upon the transfer of an interest in a hackney carriage proprietors licence that the family exemption applies, it shall in every case be for the proprietor of the licence to prove that a family relationship exists within the above definitions.

- 4.6 At the time of this consultation there are still 35 Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences that the saloon car protection and 'family exemption' applies to.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 Officers are of the view that the current policy should be reviewed to establish whether the protections and exemptions are still appropriate given the passage of over 23 years since the protection was applied and 20 years since the 'family exemption' became policy. That are being consulted on will include but are not restricted to:

- Phasing out the exemption for all licences renewed after **1st January 2029**.
- Phasing out the exemption for all licences transferred to any party from **1st January 2027**.
- Retain the current exemption but remove the ability to transfer to a family member.
- Retain the current exemption and continue to allow the plates to be transferred to an immediate family member.

- 5.2 It is proposed that the consultation run for a seven-week period starting on 27th March 2026 and ending on the 15th May 2026. It is proposed that an additional week be added to the usual six-week period to take into account that the consultation will run over Easter. It is proposed that in addition to placing the consultation document, which will comprise a series of questions, on the West Berkshire Council consultation portal officers will write to the trade and publish the consultation via press releases and post on social media and it will also be highlighted in the residents' newsletter.

- 5.3 The outcome of the consultation will be brought back to the July Licensing Committee alongside any ensuing proposed changes to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy should the consultation indicate that any changes are needed.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 The consultation period takes into consideration the requirements of the Council's consultation policies and guidance, but Members may determine that the suggested dates be amended. The Committee may also have a view on the bodies that need to be consulted and any specific questions that should be included in the consultation.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council will be grateful for the engagement of as many professionals operating within the licensed sector and other possibly affected groups by any change to the existing situation in this consultation.

8 Background Papers:

- Town Police Clauses Act 1847
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Equalities Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022
- Existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Criminal Convictions Policy
- Taxi and private hire best practice guidance for local authorities in England
- Statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards
- Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025 - 2030

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

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West Berkshire Council Licensing Committee Forward Plan July 2026 to July 2027

No.	Ref No	Item	Purpose	Lead Officer	Comments
LC 06 July 2026					
1.		Annual Report 2025/26	To set out the work of the Licensing Committee in 2025/26 as well as the work of the Licensing Service as delivered through the Public Protection Partnership.	Moira Fraser	
2.		Scrap Metal Licensing Policy	To consider a draft policy.	Julia O' Brien	
3.		Approach to Fireworks	To update the existing approach.	Theresa Bashford	
4.		Updates to the Statement of Licensing Policy	To consider any updates to the SoLP arising from updates to s182 guidance	Moira Fraser	
LC 02 November 2026					
5.		Fees and Charges 2027/28	To set out the Fees and Charges which have been proposed by the Joint Public Protection Committee at the October 2026 meeting and agree the methodology for consultation for the fees the council has a statutory duty to consult on.	Moira Fraser	
6.		Hackney Carriage Tariffs - 2027	To consider proposals for adjustments to the tariffs and the proposed consultation process should a request to amend them be received.	Moira Fraser	
7.		Charity Collections Policy	To consider a draft policy	Julia O' Brien	
8.		Special Treatments Bye-Laws	To consider the bye-laws	Julia O'Brien	
LC 18 January 2027					
9.		Fees for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles, Drivers and Operators	To consider any issues arising from the consultation and their impact on the proposed fees which will be recommended to full Council for approval.	Moira Fraser	

No.	Ref No	Item	Purpose	Lead Officer	Comments
10.		Hackney Carriage Tariffs - 2027	To provide any updates on tariffs for the 2027/ 28 financial year should a business case be submitted.	Moira Fraser	
11.		Sex Establishment Policy	To consider a draft policy	Julia O' Brien	
LC July 2027 (Date TBC)					
12.		Hackney Carriage Tariffs - 2027	To provide feedback on the 2026 process and any decisions made by the Executive.	Moira Fraser	If a consultation was needed
13.		Annual Report 2026/27	To set out the work of the Licensing Committee in 2026/27 5as well as the work of the Licensing Service as delivered through the Public Protection Partnership.	Moira Fraser	
14.		Street Trading Policy	To consider a draft policy	Julia O' Brien	