

LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 22 JULY 2025

Present: Councillors Woodward (Chair), Tarar (Vice-Chair), Asare, Dennis, Edwards, Keane, Leng, Magon, Mitchell, Rowland, Stevens and Thompson.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 11 November 2024 and 21 May 2025 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

3. HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY

The Committee considered a report on a proposal to introduce a consolidated Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy
- Appendix 1 - Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 - Climate Impact Assessment

The intention of the Policy was to combine several existing policies relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles, drivers and private hire operators into a single, cohesive policy document. The process also provided an opportunity to review and refresh the existing component policies at the same time.

The report stated that the Council had adopted the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Strategy 2023-2028 on 7 November 2023 (Minute 10, 2023-24 refers). The Strategy included in its Action Plan an action to conduct a full assessment of the Council's existing policies against the Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Transport (Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards, November 2022) and to publish a consolidated policy document as was recommended by the Statutory Guidance.

The report explained that the Council currently had several separate policies covering hackney carriage and private hire licensing matters and that differing application processes, specifications and emissions policies had created an unbalanced system. The report stated that having a single, cohesive policy for Hackney Carriages and private hire vehicles, drivers and operators would ensure consistent regulations, promote public safety, and simplify operations for the industry, the public and the Council.

The report provided a summary of the draft Policy, outlined its main provisions and detailed the key changes that officers had recommended be put forward for public consultation. These included:

- The removal of 'School Transport' as a separate category of licensing.
- The withdrawal of the existing subsidy for school transport licensing.
- The introduction of a new penalty points enforcement system for Hackney Carriages, aligned with the existing Private Hire scheme, alongside updates to the latter.
- Changes to the licensing requirements of Private Hire operators.

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- Changes to the licensing requirements relating to Private Hire and Hackney Carriage drivers.
- Changes to the licensing requirements relating to Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicles, including the alignment and introduction of age and emissions policies for both types of vehicles.
- Updates to the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Criminal Convictions Policy which would also be incorporated into the new combined policy.

The report sought the approval of the Committee to conduct a public consultation exercise on the draft Policy. It proposed that the exercise would take place over a six-week period during which time drivers, vehicle owners and operators involved in the hackney carriage and private hire trades, as well as other relevant stakeholders and members of the public, would be invited and encouraged to submit their feedback and comments via the Council's online Consultation Hub platform. At the same time officers and trade representatives would continue to hold regular meetings that would provide a further platform discuss and develop the proposals.

A further report setting out the results of the public consultation and highlighting any changes made to the draft Policy as a result of the process would be submitted to a future meeting at which Committee approval would be sought to adopt a final version of the Policy.

Councillor Ennis was present at the meeting and, at the invitation of the Chair, spoke to the report in his capacity as the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Alan Parkinson, Green Metro Cars, addressed the Committee on the item. He outlined the potential impact that he believed the proposed removal of the school transport licensing category would have on school transport drivers and operators.

At the meeting the Committee discussed the proposed length of the public consultation exercise and agreed to extend its duration from the six weeks originally stated in the report to a minimum of eight weeks to ensure adequate time for engagement and response from members of public and from the trades, and to ensure that school transport drivers and operators had the opportunity to respond outside of the school summer holiday period.

Resolved –

- (1) That the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, as appended to the report, be approved for public consultation;**
- (2) That the public consultation period last for a minimum of eight weeks to ensure adequate time for engagement and response;**
- (3) That a report be submitted to a future meeting to adopt a final Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, having taken the results of the public consultation exercise into account.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.24 pm)