

**LICENSING APPLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
3 MARCH 2026**

Present: Councillors Woodward (Chair), Dennis and Thompson.

38. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held 11 December 2025, 16 December 2025 and 23 December 2025 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

39. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved –

That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item of business as it was likely that there would be disclosures of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 5 specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

40. AN APPLICATION FOR THE GRANT OF A SCHOOL TRANSPORT VEHICLE DRIVER'S LICENCE AND REPORTS TO CONSIDER THE SUSPENSION/REVOCATION OF PRIVATE HIRE AND SCHOOL TRANSPORT VEHICLE DRIVER'S LICENCES.

The Sub-Committee considered a report that set out the cases relating to the following:

- An application for the grant of a Private Hire (School Transport) Driver's Licence. Applicant: AA. (Appendix 1);
- A report to consider the suspension/revocation of a Private Hire Driver's Licence. Driver: MAB. (Appendix 2);
- A report to consider the suspension/revocation of a Private Hire (School Transport) Driver's Licence. Driver: AMD. (Appendix 3);

Summaries detailing the circumstances relating to each of the cases were attached to the report at Appendices 1 to 3.

The cases at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 included video evidence that members of the Sub-Committee had viewed prior to the meeting. Additional Information had been circulated to members of the Sub-Committee regarding the case at Appendix 1 after the publication of the agenda papers.

AMD was in attendance and requested that his hearing be deferred to a later date. AMD addressed the Sub-Committee and provided responses to questions.

AA attended the hearing, addressed the Sub-Committee and responded to questions.

MAB attended the hearing, addressed the Sub-Committee and responded to questions.

Nicola Butler, Senior Licensing Enforcement Officer, presented the reports to the Sub-Committee and asked and responded to questions. Mike Harding and Ben Williams,

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Licensing Enforcement Officers, also attended the hearing and asked and responded to questions.

In reaching its decisions the Sub-Committee endeavoured throughout to strike a fair balance between the interests of the applicant and licence holders and the concerns of the Licensing Officers, but its overriding consideration was to the safeguarding of the public.

The Sub-Committee also gave due consideration to the written material contained in the paperwork, the oral evidence provided at the meeting, and to relevant legislation, guidance and the policies of Reading Borough Council (RBC), this included but was not limited to:

- The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act) Act 1976;
- The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022;
- The Equality Act 2010;
- The relevant Secretary of State's Guidance;
- RBC's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy (February 2026), including the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Convictions Policy;
- The relevant RBC driver, vehicle and operator conditions and penalty points schemes;
- All of the documents provided for the meeting, including the video evidence provided in relation to the cases at Appendices 2 and 3, and the written Additional Information circulated to the Sub-Committee by email in relation to the case at Appendix 1; and
- The Fit and Proper Person Test.

Resolved –

- (1) That, having taken into consideration the need to safeguard the public, especially in respect of school transport, the Sub-Committee concluded that it was appropriate and proportionate to refuse the application for a Private Hire (School Transport) Vehicle Driver's Licence in respect of AA (case at Appendix 1), due to AA not being considered a fit and proper person to hold such a licence for the following reasons:

REASONS:

- (a) The Sub-Committee considered that the Council's policy stated that any dishonesty by any applicant or other person on the applicant's behalf in any part of the application process could result in the licence being refused, the first question had therefore been whether there had been dishonesty;
- (b) The Sub-Committee found that AA had not answered questions on the application correctly. This related to previous refusals and his full criminal history. The Sub-Committee did not find it credible that the errors were made by accident and noted that a declaration of truth had been confirmed by AA;

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- (c) The Sub-Committee were concerned about the nature of AA's previous criminal convictions, and in particular, his conviction in 2019. The Sub-Committee noted that although this conviction was over five years ago, the policy's timescales were a minimum requirement only;
- (d) The Sub-Committee found that a school transport vehicle driver's licence meant that a driver was trusted with transporting children and vulnerable persons;
- (e) The Sub-Committee found that AA had previously received penalty points on three occasions all within the space of four months in 2008 when he had previously held a private hire licence;
- (f) The Sub-Committee noted that AA had recently been issued a licence erroneously and had returned it promptly when notified of the error. The Sub-Committee found that AA's conduct could not be criticised in any way in this regard;
- (g) The Sub-Committee found that AA had not attended a school transport vehicle driver check on 25 February 2026. The Sub-Committee found that AA could have taken alternative action to try and attend for the inspection as requested;
- (h) For all the above reasons the Sub-Committee found that AA was not a fit and proper person to hold the licence being applied for and felt that there was no choice but to follow the Council's policy and refuse the application.

(At the meeting the Chair informed AA and other parties present that they would be informed of their right of appeal when they were sent a written copy of the Sub-Committee's full decision).

- (2) That, having taken into consideration the need to safeguard the public, the Sub-Committee concluded that it was appropriate and proportionate to:
 - suspend the Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Licence held by MAB for a period of 14 days with effect from the end of 21 days' notice; and
 - require MAB to pass an extended driving assessment at his own cost within the next three months, should the assessment not be passed within the timeframe MAB will be required to return before the Sub-Committee for further consideration of whether his licence should be revoked.

The Sub-Committee's reasons were noted as follows:

REASONS:

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- (a) The Sub-Committee found the most recent allegation to be a serious one as it amounted, on the face of it, to the commission of a potential driving offence and that required immediate action;
- (b) The Sub-Committee noted that MAB had admitted that he had been watching a video on his mobile phone whilst driving. The Sub-Committee did not accept that he did so as a mistake;
- (c) The Sub-Committee found that MAB had been aware of the risks of using a mobile phone while driving as he had previously completed a mobile phone awareness course following an earlier incident involving mobile phone use while driving;
- (d) The Sub-Committee found that MAB was an experienced professional driver and had a long driving record with no other matters recorded against him;
- (e) The Sub-Committee found that MAB's driving had fallen below the standard expected of a licensed private hire driver;
- (f) In light of the findings above, the Sub-Committee considered the proportionate action to be a suspension as an alternative to revocation which it also considered;
- (g) The Sub-Committee found that MAB was a fit and proper person to hold a licence, but that the suspension of his licence for a 14 day period was necessary for MAB to allow him time to reinforce his knowledge of his licence conditions, the laws in relation to mobile phone usage whilst driving and to reflect on his actions;
- (h) The Sub-Committee found that a suspension period for this purpose was the best and necessary way to safeguard the public. The period of 14 days was the shortest period the Sub-Committee felt it could suspend for bearing in mind the circumstance of the matter;
- (i) The Sub-Committee found that MAB's standard of driving had been so poor that MAB should also be required to pass an extended driving assessment at his own cost and within the next three months. Should the course not be passed within that timeframe he will be required to return before the Sub-Committee for it to consider whether his licence should be revoked.

(At the meeting the Chair informed MAB and other parties present that they would be informed of their right of appeal when they were sent a written copy of the Sub-Committee's full decision).

- (3) That, having considered AMD's request to defer determination of his case, the review of the Private Hire (School Transport) Vehicle Driver's Licence in

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respect of AMD be postponed to a future meeting of the Licensing Applications Sub-Committee, to enable AMD to obtain interpretation support and to allow him to attend the hearing with appropriate representation. Bearing in mind all the circumstances and the principles of natural justice, the request to have appropriate representation was a fair one as it would allow him to present his position properly. Bearing in mind the potential consequences of the decision to be made it was in the interests of justice to postpone as requested.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 5)

(The meeting started at 5.00 pm and closed at 7.05 pm)

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