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General Purposes and Licensing Committee

Monday, 26 January 2026

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

26 January 2026
10.00 am - 12.15 pm

Present: Councillors McPherson (Chair), Bick, Blackburn-Horgan, Clough, Divkovic, Lokhmotova, Moore, Swift and Wade

Officers

Strategic Environmental Health and Public Safety Lead: Yvonne O'Donnell

Env Health & Licensing Support Team Leader: Wangari Njiiri

Legal Advisor: Ian Hawkings

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Meeting Producer: Sarah Michael

Other Persons Present

Taxi Demand Survey Consultant: Ian Millership

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/1/GPLC Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Smith.

26/2/GPLC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Clough	26/4/GPLC	Personal: Sat on the committee of the Newnham Croft Social and Sports Club.

26/3/GPLC Public Questions

There were no public questions.

26/4/GPLC Limiting Hackney Carriage Licences Report

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Environmental Health and Public Safety Lead.

The purpose of the Officer's report was to present the findings of the Demand Survey and to ask the Committee to decide whether they are satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of Hackney Carriage Vehicles (HCV) within Cambridge which is unmet, and if so, whether to retain a limit on the number of HCV licences that the Council issues. If members decide to retain a limit, they must then decide what that limit would be.

In response to Members' questions the Strategic Environmental Health and Public Safety Lead // Environmental Health and Licensing Business Support Team Leader said the following:

- i. Had looked at the age of vehicles (and any associated risks) licensed by other local authorities. Older vehicles were considered safe to use.
- ii. Officers tried to balance environmental and accessibility considerations. Drivers were choosing to move away from accessible vehicles when selecting new cars. Increasing the age range from 11 to 12 years was a short term mitigation measure to keep a certain level of accessible vehicles available. The Council could consider giving an incentive for drivers to keep accessible vehicles but the market was more interested in electric vehicles.
- iii. When the demand survey was undertaken, 270 plates were working. If someone gave up their plate, it would have to be replaced with a like-for-like vehicle by the new owner. For example, if a driver with an accessible car gave up a plate, the new owner would have to use an accessible car.
- iv. There are no negative impacts from reducing 360 plates to 270, this would give 12 spare plates for Officers to allocate.

In response to Members' questions the Taxi Demand Survey Consultant said the following:

- i. The number of wheelchair accessible hackney carriages serving city ranks varied.
 - a. Cambridge City Station rank was on private land, drivers needed a permit to service this rank, so fewer wheelchair accessible hackney carriages went there. More saloon cars went to the station. This was not a problem. Taxi drivers offered excellent customer service and wheelchair accessible hackney carriages could be booked if required, generally customers were happy with saloon cars.

- b. The rail company were hard to persuade to increase the number of taxi permits. They did not see any customers having problems so were unlikely to increase the number of permits.
- c. The Market Square rank was less used by customers so taxis did not use it as much as other ranks.

In response to Members' questions the Strategic Environmental Health and Public Safety Lead // Taxi Demand Survey Consultant said the following:

- i. Disability training for taxi drivers was agreed by Licensing Committee in 2025. Since Veezu took over Panther Taxis, they were less keen to work with Officers to get driver training.
- ii. The law stated drivers could only charge a fee from when a journey started to its end. Loading and unloading were not included. People who had additional needs may take more time to load themselves and their accruelements, so some taxi drivers may be less willing to take them in favour of able bodied people with less luggage who could be collected faster ie taxi drivers could get through more able bodied customers than disabled ones in the same amount of time and so earn more. Nationally it was difficult to prebook wheelchair accessible vehicles.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment said people may perceive a wheelchair accessible vehicle was an economic disadvantage. However more people could fit in a wheelchair accessible hackney carriage, they were good to use for groups of people, so were a multi-use vehicle.

- iii. Hackney carriage and private hire drivers appreciated a limit on the number of vehicles/plates; they thought this gave market stability so people were willing to invest in plates and vehicles. Removing the limit may lead to fewer hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.
- iv. If the City Council limit on taxis/plates was removed, all vehicles would have to be wheelchair accessible as per 1999 Licensing Policy. The limit included a variation to allow a certain number of plates to be allocated to electric saloon vehicles.
- v. The demand survey was undertaken at random. It sampled people from across the city and visitors from around the country. The sample did not include international travellers.
- vi. 'Grandfather rights' lasted forever.

- vii. The market for large electric vehicles was limited and decreasing. Manufacturers provided few. The market for second hand electric vehicles was limited. Few vehicles made it to the second hand market when sold by owners.
- viii. Officers undertook some undercover work to see if drivers would take assistance dogs and they did. This showed some drivers needed some general disability training.
- ix. Most City Council taxi ranks were accessible, where they were not, it was due to lack of drop kerbs which was a County Council responsibility. The station taxi rank was the responsibility of the land owner.
- x. Officers checked every 6 months that CCTV was working in taxis, and took enforcement action if it was not.

The Committee:

The Chair decided to split the vote at the request of Members.

Resolved (by 8 votes to 0 with 1 abstention) to:

- i. Confirm Members were satisfied there was no significant unmet demand for hackney carriages in Cambridge which was unmet.

Resolved (by 4 votes to 3 with 2 abstentions) to:

- ii. Set a limit of 270 licenced plates, as this was the number of licenced plates issued at the time of the demand survey in July 2025.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- iii. Agree the licence age of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) should be increased from 11 years to 12 years.
- iv. A vehicle licence would not be renewed unless the vehicle is less than 12 years old.

26/5/GPLC Annual Review of Fees and Charges Report

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Environmental Health and Public Safety Lead.

The report advised Cambridge City Council (as the Licensing Authority) was responsible for processing and issuing licences for a wide range of activities.

The Council needed to demonstrate the fees it charged for such licences have been set in accordance with the law and best practice, to recover its allowable costs in administering the various licensing regimes for which it is responsible.

The Officer's report sets out the revised fees and charges for licences and associated items, which it is proposed should be made with effect from 1st April 2026. The approved charges will be submitted to Full Council to note on 26th February 2026.

In response to the report the Committee made the following comments

- i. Fees seemed reasonable.
- ii. Referred to paragraph 5.5: The policy could not be amended until 2027.
- iii. In order to reduce fees cost savings would have to be found elsewhere through efficiency savings such as the online portal reduced officer time resource requirements. Some fees were subsidised through a budget bid to the City Council Annual Budget. Any further subsidies would require another budget bid.

The Committee:

Resolved (unanimously):

- i. To approve the level of the fees and charges with effect from 1st April 2026, as set out in Appendix D of the Officer's report.
- ii. Requested Officers to communicate changes with members of the public, businesses and taxi trade.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm

CHAIR

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