

Contact Officer: Nicola Sylvester

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Monday 15th September 2025

Present: Councillor Eric Firth (Chair)
Councillor Zarina Amin
Councillor Ali Arshad
Councillor Timothy Bamford
Councillor Donna Bellamy
Councillor Paola Antonia Davies
Councillor Charles Greaves
Councillor Andrew Marchington
Councillor Mohan Sokhal
Councillor Alex Vickers
Councillor Munir Ahmed

In attendance: Fiona Goldsmith, Public Protection Group Leader for Licensing
Russell Williams, Operational Manager for Public Protection
Martin Wood, Head of Public Protection
Tahir Hanif, Senior Legal Officer

Apologies: Councillor Aafaq Butt

10 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

11 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Aafaq Butt.

12 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

13 Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public session.

14 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

15 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

16 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Fees Report

(Under the provision of Council Procedure Rule 37, the Committee received representations from Katherine Walter and Suhail Rashid.)

Fiona Goldsmith, Public Protection Group Leader for Licensing, presented a report on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Fees. Members were asked to consider objections and representations submitted during the statutory consultation period by members of the trade and their representatives, and then to determine and approve the fees for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire, with or without modification. The Committee was advised that they would also need to set a date when the fees would come into force; that must be no later than the 23rd September, which was 2 months from the end of the consultation.

The Committee was advised that, in accordance with Sections 53 and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council was permitted to set fees for the licensing of Hackney Carriage and private hire drivers, vehicles, and operators, provided those fees were reasonable and did not exceed the cost of administering the licensing scheme. A fee calculation and statutory consultation was undertaken with the trade in 2023, during which concerns were raised regarding historic surpluses and deficits. As a result, fees were held at existing levels pending a full financial review, which had now been completed by the Council's Finance Service, covering the period since 2015 when the last fee review took place. The review identified a deficit of £98,000 as of 31 March 2024 (page 11 of the report).

The Committee was informed that on 26 June 2025, a draft schedule of proposed fees and charges for the financial years 2025/26, 2026/27, and 2027/28 was issued for consultation with the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade. Although the legal requirement to consult applied only to vehicle and operator fees, the Council also included driver fees in the consultation. The decision to consult over a three-year period was made partly to reduce costs. The proposed fee structure included a 3% increase for the current year, followed by a 2% increase in each of the subsequent two years, subject to adjustment in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) if it falls below 2%.

Ms Goldsmith informed the Committee that a notice was published in the Huddersfield Examiner and displayed at Flint Street offices to inform members of the public and the trade of the consultation, which closed on 24th July 2025. In response to the consultation, 160 representations were received, including four standard template submissions and six individual responses.

Members were advised that any new or amended fees must take effect no later than 23rd September 2025 and that the Committee must advise of the date.

In response to a question from the Committee, Ms Goldsmith advised that the fee review had considered figures from 2015 when the last fee review had taken place, and that this approach had been approved by external counsel. The fee review of 2015 had not been challenged at that time.

Katherine Walter, a representative of the trade, advised the Committee that the trade was not opposed to an increase in fees if this was necessary, however there

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were concerns over the transparency of how funds from the taxi trade were spent in relation to the costs of the licensing activities, and the accuracy of figures in table 2.6 of the report.

Ms Goldsmith clarified that the row indicating corporate charges had been omitted from the report, hence why the total figures did not add together. It was agreed that the correct table with the complete figures be circulated to all parties.

Questions were asked regarding the percentages of overall licensing costs and if they were proportionate to the work carried out in the licensing department for the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade, along with the cost of employing members of staff. The Committee noted that the corporate charge percentage related to the number of applications received and the salary costs included National Insurance and pension contributions.

Suhail Rashid, Hackney Carriage driver and trade representative for Kirklees, raised concerns regarding the way that licensing fees had been handled, especially regarding financial records relating to license fees prior to 2015, which had not been provided despite repeated requests. Mr Rashid suggested that without access to historical financial records, current and future fee levels demonstrated a lack of transparency and requested that the fees remain frozen until records were released. Concerns were also raised over the historic surplus that had been made by the licensing department from trade fees and advised that in 2015 badge prices had increased from £56 to £90, while the licensing department were making a profit.

Ms Goldsmith informed the Committee that information requests on surpluses and fees in the finance structure would be dealt with by the finance team. Requests within the representations submitted to the fee review from the trade had been forwarded to the Freedom of Information team.

The Committee were advised that a Freedom of Information request for information prior to 2015 had been submitted and the finance team had responded that information was no longer held.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the fee structure as set out Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
- 2) That the date set for fees to take effect be 22nd September 2025