

Minutes of a meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee on Monday 22 September 2025

www.oxford.gov.uk



Committee members present:

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Ottino

Councillor Waite

Councillor Jupp

Councillor Yeatman

Councillor Taylor

Councillor Lygo

Councillor Upton

Councillor Miles

Councillor Muddiman (Chair)

Councillor Rehman (Vice-Chair)

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Alison Daly, Legal Advisor

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Joshua Curnow, Licensing Team Manager

Katie Thorp, Supervising Senior Licensing Officer

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Clarkson, Sandelson and Rawle sent apologies.

22. Declarations of interest

The Chair reminded the Committee to declare any interests relating to communication or meetings with any member of the licensing trader or persons noted on the agenda.

Councillor Rehman declared that he had regularly spoken with members of COLTA to discuss their grievance but confirmed that he would approach this Committee meeting with a fair and open mind.

Councillor Taylor noted that he had been scheduled to meet with COLTA, however this was cancelled and did not take place. Councillor Taylor also confirmed that he would be attending this meeting with a fair and open mind.

Councillor Upton noted her communications with members of the licensing trade over recent years but confirmed that she would also be attending this meeting with a with a fair and open mind.

Councillor Mundy declared that he had historically met with COLTA but not in recent months. Councillor Mundy also confirmed that he would be attending this meeting with a with a fair and open mind.

Councillor Miles noted that she had spoken with members of COLTA socially at an Oxford City Council Christmas event but noted that they had not discussed the policy being considered at this meeting. Councillor Miles also confirmed that she would be attending this meeting with a with a fair and open mind.

23. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Licensing Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025 as a true and accurate record.

24. Addresses by members of the public

The Chair invited Mr. Bashir Ahmed to address the Committee, noting that he would be allocated five minutes to speak.

A copy of the address is published as a supplement to these minutes.

The Chair invited Mr. Jonathan Payne to address the Committee, noting that he would be allocated five minutes to speak.

A copy of the address is published as a supplement to these minutes.

The Chair thanked Mr. Ahmed and Mr. Payne for their addresses to the Committee.

25. Councillor addresses on any item for discussion

None.

26. Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards Amendment

The Deputy Chief Executive for Citizens and City Services had submitted a report to consider a delay to the final phase of emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by this Authority.

The Licensing Team Manager introduced the report and provided a comprehensive summary.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee to officers.

Councillor Ottino firstly requested examples of other Councils that manage different taxi licensing regulations within different areas of their authority. Secondly, it was asked what differences there are between the regulations Oxford City Council applies to Hackney Carriage licences, in comparison to those applied by other councils, for example rules for disabled wheelchair access. Councillor Ottino expressed concern around how these differences are managed and the issues this may cause. The Licensing Team Manager noted Bath and North Somerset Council as an example of a unitary council that manages varying licensing regulations under one authority area and explained how the management of this could be approached if Oxford City Council were to be merged into a unitary council. In response to Councillor Ottino's second query, it was explained that Oxford City Council does require all Hackney Carriage Vehicles to be wheelchair accessible and provided details on the conditions for this alongside the vehicular models which meet the required standards.

Councillor Miles sought to clarify whether urban and rural variations have led to the difference in vehicle types available, or whether other root causes were responsible. The Licensing Team Manager explained that different policies exist between different authorities as variable devolution of powers to councils over many years has created discrepancies, alongside the requirements for councils to respond to varying local needs. In the case of Oxford specifically, the Committee heard that the Licensing Authority has been ahead of the rising national standards required and has therefore had to make fewer changes than other authorities.

Councillor Rehman noted a historic promise from Oxford City Council to install additional electric chargers in certain locations which has not been fulfilled. Councillor Rehman asked that by delaying the final phase of emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles, whether there would be a benefit to those who do not yet have electric taxis, noting that he did not see what financial disadvantage there could be to those who already own the required electric vehicles. The Licensing Team Manager recommended that the Committee focused on the ongoing commitments of the Council to installing electric chargers in the future. In relation to Councillor Rehman's second question, it was noted that the suggestion of a disadvantage to those who have already invested in electric cabs if the adoption of the policy were to be delayed is a hypothetical suggestion made in the report; it was not possible for detail to provide on what this may be. Councillor Rehman and the Licensing Team Manager further

debated concerns relating to the installation of electric chargers in relation to decisions made at the committee in 2019.

Councillor Upton recognised the requirement of the Committee to consider what is fair for taxi drivers, and for residents and visitors to Oxford in relation to air quality. It was therefore asked what impact Uber's introduction has had, what licensing conditions could the council impose on Uber, and what impact this has had on local Hackney Carriage drivers and rules regarding disabled access, for example. The Licensing Team Manager confirmed that Oxford City Council's Licensing Authority had no control around the introduction of Uber and no input into their application to be a private hire operator given that they legally met all required conditions. On the impacts of Uber's arrival, it was confirmed that no additional public safety concerns have emerged and there has been a reduction in complaints relating to out-of-town vehicles in the city. Furthermore, the Committee heard that Uber's current business model is to only licence Private Hire Vehicles, and so Hackney Carriage Vehicles cannot work through Uber. Further detail on the conditions and reasons for this were explained to the Committee.

Councillor Mundy queried the operational costs of the two electric models listed in the report and asked whether the cost of maintenance had been included in the figure provided to the Committee. Secondly, it was asked whether more local support has been facilitated for the maintenance of electric taxi models to avoid license holders travelling long distances to maintain their vehicles. The Licensing Team Manager was not able to confirm whether maintenance costs had been incorporated to the report, but in regards to local maintenance support, it was explained that ODS has trained more qualified technicians for this purpose and it has not since be apparent that there is a shortfall in maintenance availability for ULEV vehicles. It was also confirmed that warranty repairs were being carried out by ODS. Finally, it was noted that there are very few purpose-built wheelchair accessible vehicles on the market in the UK and that LEVC is a main contender.

Councillor Miles noted a reference within COLTA's submission included in the report to attempts to de-regulate the Hackney trade and commented on the cap to the number of Hackney Carriages which Oxford facilitates. Councillor Miles expressed the view that Hackney Carriages are preferable for the easy wheelchair accessibility they provide and asked therefore, what the time frame for this proposed de-regulation is. The Licensing Team Manager confirmed that the report was withdrawn due to the need for more consultation to inform the recommendations it made. Since this took place, the state of the trade has changed significantly, including an increase in the private hire trade, and therefore the report will likely be brought forward again once more information is available following this period of change.

The Chair, in reference to the 40 drivers who have already invested in ULEVs, noted that the tariffs for charging vary significantly at different times and locations. She therefore asked whether these 40 licence holders have the ability to charge at home; this information was not available.

The Chair noted the slow uptake rate in conversion to electric taxis, noting that if the policy were to begin in January 2026, then few additional taxis would have converted than already exist now. The Licensing Team Manager confirmed that if the policy were installed from January 2026 any new applications or renewals would be required to meet the new ultra-low emission standards and would therefore need to convert to an electric vehicle. It was noted that some of the trade may chose not to convert and retire instead which could lower the numbers of Hackney Carriages in Oxford. The details of the renewals process and options were also outlined to the Committee. The Chair asked what impact this could have on public safety, to which the Licensing Team Manager commended the important role of Hackney Carriages in supporting public safety in Oxford and noted that a severe reduction in their number would not be beneficial.

The Chair invited the Committee to debate the options within the recommendations listed in the report.

Councillor Ottino stated his preference for the option to align the adoption of the policy with Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Rehman supported Councillor Ottino's proposal, noting the difficulties Hackney Carriage drivers have faced in Oxford in recent years, including the closure of the Botley Road and the introduction of Uber.

Councillor Taylor suggested the Committee move to vote on the recommendation.

Councillor Ottino formally proposed option C in the report. The Chair clarified the wording of the recommendation as being for the Committee to agree to align with Local Government Reorganisation to postpone the final phase until the establishment of the new unitary council in 2028, aligning the policy with wider structural changes and enabling consistent standards across the new licensing authority. Councillor Rehman seconded this.

When put to a vote, 8 members voted in favour, and 2 members voted against. The recommendation was agreed.

Councillor Lygo proposed that the Committee recommend to Council that the adoption of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards aligns with Local Government Reorganisation. Councillor Upton seconded. The Committee agreed.

The General Purposes Licensing Committee resolved to:

1. Consider

- the request made by City of Oxford Licenced Taxicab Association to delay the final phase of the hackney carriage emission standards
- the Environmental Sustainability Teams Affordability and Emissions Report
- the full contents of this report including the options presented:
 - i. Maintain the current policy
 - ii. Extend the deadline by one year
 - iii. Align with Local Government Reorganisation

2. **Agree** to align with Local Government Reorganisation to postpone the final phase that all Hackney Carriage vehicles must meet the ultra-low emission vehicle standard until the establishment of the new unitary council, aligning the policy with wider structural changes and enabling consistent standards across the new licensing authority.

3. **Recommend** to Council that the adoption of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards aligns with Local Government Reorganisation.

27. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates and times of future meetings.

The meeting started at 7.35 pm and ended at 8.38 pm

Chair
2026

Date: Monday 9 February

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.