

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 19 November 2025

Committee members present:

Councillor Brown

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Railton

Councillor Turner

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Munkonge

Councillor Linda Smith

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive

Tom Hook, Deputy Chief Executive – City and Citizens' Services

Emma Jackman, Director of Law, Governance, and Strategy

Nigel Kennedy, Group Finance Director

Joshua Curnow, Supervising Senior Licensing Officer

Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager

Dr Brenda McCollum, Committee and Member Services

Also present:

Councillor Alex Powell, Chair of Scrutiny

Apologies:

No apologies were received

86. Declarations of Interest

None.

87. Minutes of the previous meeting

Cabinet resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meetings held on **22 October 2025 and 10 November 2025** as true and accurate records.

88. Addresses by members of the public

Cabinet received one address from a member of the public.

Address from Bashir Ahmed to Cabinet.

Delay to the emissions standard policy

When the Oxford taxi trade was presented with the proposals on 10th January 2019 to change from diesel taxis to electric taxis, 6 years seemed a reasonable time for the transition but unfortunately then came COVID-19. The Taxi trade lost four years because of the coronavirus

Along came the new trend of people working from home which has continued as people are still working from home

To make matters worse the closure of Botley Road.

We have lost all our work to Botley and beyond. There is no guarantee when the Botley Road will reopen. As if this wasn't bad enough, last summer the summer of 2024, the nightclubs in Oxford permanently shut their doors and closed down. There are no night revellers during the week nor the weekends. The city centre has become a ghost town.

With licensing of Uber in Oxford in December 2024

We have witnessed private hires from Southampton, Portsmouth, Wolverhampton and further away operating in Oxford.

Uber is a £53 billion international company. It's subsidises fares during the promotional periods which no other private hire operator or the Hackney carriage trade can match. But once established, they have peak and off-peak crazy prices.

LEVC cost

The price of the electric taxi has gone up again. Now from £75,000-£82,000, that is if bought on cash, but on interest it is £105,000. It's a lot of money.

The 40 Proprietor is in Oxford who have changed to electric taxis, most of them but not all of them took advantage of the £7000 government grant which at that time reduced the price of the electric taxi down to £55,000 cash price and of course, the price of the new electric taxi was significantly less then to what it is now.

£5000 local council grant was also granted to drivers who had purchased the electric taxi. This also included three years of Taxi License fee relief. Plus the cheaper electricity making it a very viable package to run the electric taxi.

But in current times, the cost of electric to charge the electric taxi has gone up from 18p per kw/h to 74p per kw/h. And the grants are no longer available from our council and the government has reduced its plug in grant if purchasing a new taxi.

Zero emissions zone and other licensing authorities giving extension to their licence holder to change to more greener vehicles

Initially the expanded ZEZ in Oxford was planned for 2025, but it has now been delayed. We have been informed that the implementation will not take place until at least 2028, following a public consultation.

Given the new timeline, we think it's very reasonable that we are given more time so we can prepare for this better.

Other licensing authorities have their own strategies for tackling high levels of emissions. Given the difficult financial climate that taxi drivers are facing across the country, various licensing authorities have granted extra time for drivers to switch their vehicles to low emission or zero emission ones. This is a significant consideration.

Such authorities are:

- 1) South Cambridgeshire who are expected to give their drivers to 2030 to change over.
- 2) Coventry licensing authority are seriously considering pushing back their policy to 2030
- 3) Both Rochdale and Manchester strategies are matched and delayed their emission standards till 2030
- 4) Reading's policy has set a target of 2028 where all vehicles must be a minimum of ULEZ.

Conclusion

We have demonstrated our intent that we want to work with the city council and 40% of our proprietors have changed over to the electric taxis.

Any concerns about air pollution in the city is more than mitigated in the context of the introduction of 159 electric buses on the city bus routes in 2024 as well as 40 new London style taxis. We are doing our bit for the environment.

We would like to thank the city council but feel that additional latitude is required for the transition given all of the circumstances explained.

Councillor Brown explained the legal advice that Cabinet had received, which caused this decision to move from the Licensing Committee to Cabinet. She said that in future, they would take these types of decisions at Licensing Committee, following changes to the constitution to allow this later in the month.

Councillor Railton provided Cabinet's response to the address from the member of the public.

Councillor Railton noted that they would address the key concerns of the member of the public in their discussion of the report.

89. Councillor addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None received.

90. Councillor addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None received.

91. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

92. Reports from the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee met on 11 November 2025 to consider the following item.

- Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards Amendment

Councillor Alex Powell presented the Committee's conversations and recommendations regarding the report. He noted that the discussion was extensive and outlined the concerns of members of the Scrutiny Committee regarding the correct governance route for this decision. Councillor Powell said that the Committee considered the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and how this should influence the decision.

- **Recommendation 1:** To have consistency with emissions standards policies for both Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriage Vehicles.
- **Recommendation 2:** In the event that Cabinet approves the delay to the implementation of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards Amendment to align with Local Government Reorganisation, they will review this once the timescale been defined.

Councillor Railton responded to the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee. She said that Cabinet was not accepting the first recommendation but were accepting the second one. She noted that it would not be feasible to accept the first recommendation, due to the implications of Local Government Reorganisation. She also noted that the Cabinet response to the first recommendation in the Scrutiny supplement should be replaced with the following wording:

Given the wider context of the recommendation for Hackneys, the same uncertainty lies with LGR for decisions around harmonising PHV standards with those of Hackneys. It would therefore not be a good use of a (large amount) of officer time to undertake this work at this time.

93. Deferral of the commencement of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards

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

Councillor Railton presented the report. She explained that in January of 2026, there was an existing requirement for Hackney Carriages to become fully electric. She outlined the three options detailed in the report, and noted their preferred

recommendation, to delay the implementation of the Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle Standards for hackney carriage vehicles, to be revisited by such successor organisation that results from Local Government Reorganisation. She also noted the challenges facing the trade and drivers, which influenced their approach to the recommendation before Cabinet. Councillor Railton said that they did not want to disadvantage local taxis, as compared to other taxi drivers that may come into the area due to Local Government Reorganisation. She said that this recommendation was supportive of the opinions of taxi drivers and the relevant economic data.

Councillor Turner spoke in support of the recommendation. He emphasised the importance of the taxi trade in Oxford and acknowledged that they were an authority which regulates more closely than others. He recognized the challenges faced by the trade and drivers, including the lack of people out during the night and the closure of the Botley road. He noted the high quality and important work of the taxi drivers in Oxford and stated the importance of members using their positions to voice concerns to central government.

Councillor Brown agreed with Councillor Turner on the importance of local authorities being the organisations which regulate the local taxi trade.

Councillor Hollingsworth agreed with the points made by Councillors Turner and Railton. He agreed that it had been quieter in nighttime hours in the city centre. He asked for clarity regarding the legal position and governance route being taken by Cabinet. Councillor Hollingsworth asked about the legal advice they had received and why it was necessary for Cabinet to take this decision, instead of the Licensing Committee.

Emma Jackman, the Director of Law, Governance, and Strategy, responded to the question from Councillor Hollingsworth. She said that the advice was based on a limited case which looked particularly at taxi licensing. In line with general practice, she would agree with Councillor Hollingsworth and said that she did not have concerns that this was a wider issue. However, due to a particular case on taxi licensing, the Council was advised to take this governance route.

Councillor Brown agreed that this was a one off, particular case. She noted that if they'd had more time, they would have amended the constitution first and then taken this decision at Licensing Committee. However, she said that they did not want to leave the trade in limbo, and they wanted to give the trade and drivers certainty as soon as possible. She noted that the report and recommendations before them were the same as those presented to the Licensing Committee.

Cabinet resolved to:

- **Approve** the delay to the implementation on the 1 January 2026 of the Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle Standards for hackney carriage vehicles, to be revisited by such successor organisation that results from Local Government Reorganisation.

94. Dates of future meetings

Cabinet noted the dates of future meetings.

Matters Exempt from Publication

If Cabinet wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Cabinet to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The meeting started at 18:00 and ended at 18:28.

Chair

Date: 10 December 2025

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.