

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 11 November 2025

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Committee members present:

Councillor Powell (Chair)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Corais

Councillor Latif

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Qayyum

Councillor Rowley (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Azad

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Miles

Councillor Ottino

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager

Joshua Curnow, Supervising Senior Licensing Officer

Emma Jackman, Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)

Tina Mould, Environmental Sustainability Lead

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Stares sent apologies.

61. Declarations of interest

Councillor Ottino and Councillor Miles noted their membership of the General Purposes Licensing Committee and their involvement in previous discussions relating to the report being considered at this meeting.

Councillor Ottino, Councillor Jarvis, and Councillor Powell noted that they had previously received correspondence from COLTA.

62. Chair's Announcements

None.

63. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meetings held on 14 October 2025 and 5 November 2025 as a true and accurate records.

64. Addresses by members of the public

None.

65. Councillor addresses on any item for discussion on the Scrutiny agenda

Councillor Muddiman was not present at this stage to make her address.

66. Hackney Carriage Vehicle Emission Standards Amendment

Cabinet, at its meeting on 19 November 2025, will consider a report to consider a delay to the final phase of emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles (HCV) licensed by this Authority.

Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Zero Carbon Oxford, Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager, Joshua Curnow, Supervising Senior Licensing Officer, Emma Jackman, Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer), and Tina Mould, Environmental Sustainability Lead, were present to respond to questions.

The Monitoring Officer presented the report and summarised updates to the decision-making process following the recent decision at the General Purposes Licensing Committee. Following advice from Counsel, the Committee were informed that due to nuances of case law and the need to ensure a decision on this as swiftly as possible for the benefit of the Hackney Carriage drivers, the report would now be taken to Cabinet for decision. Following this, an explicit resolution is expected to be made by Council on 24 November stating that it holds all future decisions on taxi licensing policy, addressing the points in the advice from Counsel that led them to conclude it was a decision currently resting with Cabinet.

Councillor Altaf-Khan requested further clarification around the decision-making chain linked to the report and asked where the responsibility for the matter lies.

Councillor Mundy and Councillor Corais joined the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the legislation requiring the next steps to be taken is not new, and any confusion does not relate to whether the constitution was adhered

to or not. The matter instead rests on the nuances of specific examples of relevant case law which were not widely known about.

Councillor Altaf-Khan queried whether this would be the new route for decisions from the General Purposes Licensing Committee in the future.

Councillor Miles queried how the responsibilities of the General Purposes Licensing Committee may be impacted by these changes and asked whether these would apply to all licensing functions, or only taxi licensing. Councillor Miles expressed concern regarding the process of the decision taken at the last meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that each area of licensing has its own legislation, and the matters discussed during this meeting would apply only to taxi licensing. The Committee were assured that there is no proposal for the General Purposes Licensing Committee to no longer make recommendations to Council; it is however required that Council ratify this in an explicit statement to ensure the Council has made a clear statement that the decision is for full Council and does not default to Cabinet. In regard Council debate, it was confirmed that discussion of taxi licensing matters is permitted and the Monitoring Officer clarified that the steps now being taken are not politically influenced.

Councillor Muddiman joined the meeting.

The Chair clarified that the decision, on this occasion, is being taken to Cabinet due to time constraints, and that in the future, decisions on taxi licensing policy are expected to be taken by Council. The Monitoring Officer confirmed this is the proposal to be put forward to Council.

Councillor Miles thanked the Monitoring Officer for the clarification and asked whether there is anything to stop Members from bringing forward motions at Council relating to taxi licensing in the future.

The Monitoring Officer explained that motions related to taxi licensing could be submitted in line with necessary processes, but that there would always need to be officer consideration and advice before anything could be brought forward for a final decision. Motions could not result in final decisions being made in policy.

Councillor Latif joined the meeting.

The Chair informed Members that Councillor Muddiman was now present and invited her to address the Committee.

Councillor Muddiman informed the Committee that she would not address procedural concerns and would focus her address on the report itself. The Committee heard her concerns that the decision taken at the last meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee did not set a clear date for the delay of the policy and she urged Members to consider recommending that the policy instead be delayed to a specified date, or by only one further year. Councillor Muddiman recognised that it is unrealistic for the policy to begin in January 2026 as so far, not enough taxi drivers have converted to electric vehicles. Concerns regarding CO2 emissions were also emphasised.

The Chair invited questions to Councillor Muddiman from the Committee.

Councillor Jarvis asked the Chair why Councillor Muddiman could not speak on her procedural concerns.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the Committee is only being asked to consider the report before them and the decision being taken to Cabinet. Therefore, other matters relating to the operation of the Committee meeting would not be relevant to this debate. The relevant decision-making matters were outlined in the report.

Councillor Miles noted that as the last meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee was public, its content should be considered relevant to the procedural queries raised within this meeting.

The Monitoring Officer emphasised that not all officers relevant to the procedure taken at the last meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee are present to respond at this meeting.

The Chair requested any final questions to Councillor Muddiman, or those in relation to process; there were none.

The Chair asked that the Committee focus their next questions on the substance of the report; the Cabinet Member was invited to present.

Councillor Railton noted that the report had already been before the General Purposes Licensing Committee, and Members were offered a summary of current context relating to the taxi trade including Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), electricity prices, and the ongoing Botley Road closure.

Councillor Miles queried the number of taxis which may operate in the area following LGR and asked whether there is precedent for larger authorities to oversee simultaneous operation of different licensing regimes with their area.

Councillor Mundy queried the number of HCVs that may be expected following LGR, and asked whether the changing local context, including the recent congestion charge, may bring about any benefits.

Councillor Ottino noted that Oxford City Council is comparably progressive in terms of environmental goals and related taxi policy and, therefore, asked whether conversations had taken place with neighbouring councils to see if they could catch up. Councillor Ottino also requested information on cost comparisons for drivers in varying districts who drive normal cars as opposed to electric and wheelchair enabled Hackney Carriages.

Councillor Railton invited the Community Safety Service Manager and the Supervising Senior Licensing Officer to respond.

The Supervising Senior Licensing Officer, in response to Councillor Miles, referred to paragraph 21 of the report which summarised predictions of taxi numbers in different LGR scenarios. In regards precedent for operation of simultaneous regimes under one authority, the Committee were informed of the example of Bath and North Somerset Council, however noted that extensive legal research would be required to assess the feasibility of a comparable arrangement in Oxford.

In response to Councillor Mundy, the Supervising Senior Licensing Officer noted that the congestion charge could provide potential benefits but emphasised that the matter is not controlled by this licensing authority, and that the impact is yet to be seen.

Finally, in response to Councillor Ottino, the Supervising Senior Licensing Officer explained that policy would not directly align with other licensing authorities and pointed to paragraph 19 of the report which listed the comparable plans of other Councils. The Committee heard that relevant conversations would occur in the future during LGR adjustments. Finally, in relation to the comparable cost of out-of-town Hackney Carriages, the Supervising Senior Licensing Officer explained that purpose-built HCVs which support disabled wheelchair access, and meet the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) standard, are more expensive as there are limited companies that provide this combination of vehicle requirements in the UK. It was confirmed that neighbouring authorities do not require this capability for all HCVs, so their relative costs are lower.

The Chair invited further questions from the Committee.

Councillor Altaf-Khan requested that the Committee and Council focus on its own licensing matters.

Councillor Corais noted his belief that a delay to the start date of the policy would be warranted given the uncertainty around LGR. Councillor Corais asked if any compensation had been offered to the 40 drivers who have already converted to

electric taxis and requested environmental data on air pollution linked to any delay from 2026 to 2028. Finally, Councillor Corais asked how a delay would link with the Council's priority for a Zero Carbon Oxford.

Councillor Miles, in relation to LGR, requested information on the timescales for the expected change to taxi licensing procedures and regulations. In connection to Councillor Corais' question, it was also asked whether there is consistency of the proposed approach with the Council's previous support for expanded Zero Emissions Zones (ZEZ) in the city. It was noted that this may cause issues for existing Hackney Carriages who have not converted to electric models yet.

Councillor Railton, in relation to emissions data, referred the Committee to the February 2025 air quality attainment report. In response to Councillor Corais, it was confirmed that early adopters of electric taxis were awarded access to various grants. The Committee also heard that of around 60,000 cars in Oxford city, only around 5-10% are EVs. In regard the expansion of any ZEZ, Councillor Railton emphasised that it is not a City Council decision and noted her understanding that taxis of all types would be exempt.

The Environmental Sustainability Lead summarised data which has found Hackney Carriages to be no longer the worst polluting taxi sector in the city and clarified that £5k grant funding had been made available for early adopters to support purchase of vehicles. It had also supported installation of chargers, providing cheaper charging. None of these measures are available in 2025. The Committee were informed that some early adopters had bought electric models without this funding. The Environmental Sustainability Lead commented that any policy to require conversion of all Hackney Carriages to electric models would align most closely with the Council's latest Air Quality Action Plan and the Council's priority for a Zero Carbon Oxford by 2040. A delay at this point would not significantly impact either.

The Community Safety Services Manager confirmed that taxis outside of city are licensed differently and referred the Committee to paragraph 14 of the report which outlined the phased changes to vehicle types over recent years.

The Supervising Senior Licensing Officer provided further data on emissions statistics which confirmed that the authority currently licenses 43 ULEV standard Hackney Carriages, with 59% of the total licenced Hackney Carriage vehicles producing CO2 emissions of 200+g/km; and that the authority licences 984 private hire vehicles, with only 1.4% of these vehicles producing CO2 emissions of 200+g/km.

The Chair invited further questions from the Committee.

Councillor Latif expressed his support for the decision made at the last meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee, noting that most taxi drivers in Oxford are employees of small private businesses and therefore, would incur a huge financial toll

when converting to fully electric vehicles in an uncertain regulatory future. Councillor Latif noted concern with the disproportionately high level of scrutiny on the matter given the demographic of the groups involved. On this basis, it was asked whether the introduction of App-Based Operators had suppressed the trade for normal Hackney Carriages and whether any analysis had been undertaken of the potential consequences of a harsh regulatory environments on certain vehicles.

The Chair asked whether assessments of feasibility around the delay options presented had been undertaken, especially given the likelihood of an incoming shadow authority under LGR.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that until the initiation of a shadow authority, all existing policy would remain in place and discussion would begin once shadow authorities emerge.

The Community Safety Service Manager, in response to Councillor Latif, clarified that the Licensing Authority could not provide information on the business plans of the App-Based Operators as they are private entities. The Committee were referred to the briefing at the back of the report for details regarding the impact of the App-Based Operators introduction in Oxford. The Community Safety Service Manager reiterated that current risks to the taxi sector include other operators using technology and operating models which allow them to undercut licensed vehicle; further information was enclosed within the briefing provided, including on safeguarding matters and out of town vehicles.

The Chair invited any final comments from the Committee.

Councillor Altaf-Khan thanked officers for the information provided and emphasised that any recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet should encourage a firm decision and fair process.

Councillor Miles reminded the Committee of the importance of environmental imperatives and emphasised the importance of trust being supported in the rules and regulations of Council systems. Councillor Miles also emphasised the need for defined and consistent recommendations.

Councillor Mundy queried the affordability of electricity impacting on taxi drivers and asked whether Cabinet is favouring delays in line with LGR.

The Monitoring Officer reiterated that the request to review the Governance arrangements regarding Taxi Licensing Policy did not come from Cabinet, but the decision would be approached with an open mind.

Councillor Jarvis emphasised his concerns regarding inequity in the expectations placed on Hackney Carriages and private hire vehicles and around LGR being used as a mechanism for stalling deadlines. The Committee heard his view that policy decisions must proceed as usual.

The Chair echoed Councillor Miles' and Councillor Mundy's comments and emphasised that LGR should not be viewed as a reason to delay progressive policies.

In response to Councillor Mundy, Councillor Railton noted that electricity prices are not a local authority matter and emphasised that any delay would not necessarily be in response to LGR, but as means of addressing the situations for taxi drivers in Oxford currently.

The Supervising Senior Licensing Officer noted that the original report presented to the General Purposes Licensing Committee assessed the three options for delay, including the option to align with LGR. The Committee also heard that regardless of the decision taken at this stage, all policies would be reconsidered at the time of a shadow authority being installed.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss possible recommendations.

The Environmental Sustainability Lead left the meeting during this discussion and did not return.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

- To have consistency with emissions standards policies for both Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriage Vehicles.
- 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 left the meeting and did not return.

67. Scrutiny Work Plan

The Committee **agreed** to the Work Plan.

68. Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations

The Committee and Member Services Manager noted that at its meeting on 22 October 2025, Cabinet considered reports from the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and the Annual Safeguarding Report.

The Committee **noted** Cabinet’s responses to its recommendations.

69. Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups

The Committee and Member Services Manager noted that since the Scrutiny Committee’s previous meeting, the Finance and Performance Working Group met once on 29 October 2025. Members were informed that under the delegated authority granted to the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor, the recommendations had been forwarded to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group, in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee **noted** the recommendations from the Finance and Performance Working Group.

The Community Safety Services Manager reminded the Committee that information they had previously requested was attached to the back of the report.

The Chair thanked all officers for their attendance.

70. Dates of future meetings

The Committee **noted** the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm

Chair Date: Tuesday 2 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.

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