



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Licensing Committee

Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 10:00am
on Wednesday 11 February 2026

Present:

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Christine Colbert (Substituting for Cllr Cane)
Cllr Lee Denney
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr Mark Goldsack
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Keith Horgan
Cllr Julia Huffer (Chair)
Cllr Mark Inskip
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Christine Whelan
Cllr Gareth Wilson

Officers:

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Stewart Broome – Licensing Manager
Maggie Camp – Director Legal

24. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Charlotte Cane. Cllr Christine Colbert attended as a substitute for Cllr Cane.

25. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Minutes

The Committee received the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 19 November 2025 and the two Licensing (Non-Statutory) Sub Committees held on 10 September 2025.

It was resolved unanimously:

- A)** that the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 19 November 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:
- In the fourth paragraph of minute 21 on page 5 the word “taxis” be amended to “private hire vehicles”.
 - In the fifth paragraph of minute 21 on page 5 the penultimate sentence to read “Cllr Mark Inskip also supported the proposed increases in table 1 and suggested that it was right to include details of the options in tables 2 and 3 in the report.”
- B)** That the Minutes of the two Licensing (Non-Statutory) Sub Committees on 10 September 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

27. Chair’s announcements

There were no Chair’s announcements.

28. Consultation on Local Transport Authorities and the Licensing of Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles

The Licensing Manager, Stewart Broome, presented a report, AA139 previously circulated, which informed the Committee of a Government consultation on the transfer of responsibility for taxis and private hire vehicles licensing from District Councils and Metropolitan Borough Councils to Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) in England as part of an effort to curb “out of area” working. The Licensing Manager expressed doubts whether reducing the number of taxi licensing authorities would address this issue, as there would still be movement between the authority areas. He explained that whilst there would be economies of scale by reducing the number of taxi licensing authorities, there would also be diseconomies of scale by reducing the number of licensing applications that the other licensing authorities would have to process. This could result in a reduction in charges for the trade but an increase in costs for the councils that would no longer be processing taxi licence applications.

Cllr Julia Huffer expressed concern regarding this consultation, which appeared to ignore the issues of enforcement, safety or maintaining the standards of the service.

It was noted that this change could result in fewer hackney carriages in rural areas, which meant that residents would have to rely on booking private hire vehicles.

In reply to Cllr Gareth Wilson, the Licensing Manager explained that he did not expect the new licensing arrangements to come into effect until after the Local

Government Reorganisation had concluded in April 2028. He suggested that the timing of the consultation was questionable.

In reply to Cllr Mark Goldsack, the Licensing Manager explained that licensing officers and a manager would have to be transferred over to the Combined Authority, creating vacancies at the new unitary authorities.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Licensing Manager stated that private hire vehicles tended to provide transport to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as the journeys needed to be booked in advance.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Licensing Manager explained that the taxi fees charged by the Council had reduced due to economies of scale and it was therefore possible that fees would reduce further if the Combined Authority became responsible for all taxi licensing in Cambridgeshire. However, it was likely that removing taxi licensing from the other authorities in the county would increase costs due to diseconomies of scale.

In reply to Cllr Mark Inskip, the Licensing Manager expressed concern regarding both the capacity of the Combined Authority to deliver the licensing service and the plans for appeals to be determined by the magistrates' court instead of by sub-committees, meaning that there would be no councillor involvement in these decisions.

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, the Licensing Manager explained that licensed drivers could register with Uber or a similar application software to receive bookings, but only if their Licensing Authority licensed Uber as an operator. The Council does not licence Uber at present. The Licensing Manager acknowledged that safety standards varied by area and he hoped that the amount of deviation could be reduced.

It was agreed that the Committee should receive a report on responding to the consultation at its next meeting on 18 March 2026.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

29. General Licensing Update

The Licensing Manager presented this report, AA140 already circulated, which informed the Committee of the work of the Licensing Authority and emerging matters. He explained that 5,708 cases had been processed in 2025, which was almost 4,500 more than in 2024. This was due to an increase in the number of taxi licence applications. 96% of these applications were being processed electronically and so this was not impacting on any other service at the Council. This had also reduced the charges being made to applicants, as savings were being made through economies of scale and the Council was not permitted to make a profit. 10 licences had been revoked, which was a very small proportion of the licences granted.

The Licensing Manager explained that the Tobacco and Vapes Bill was being discussed by the House of Lords and was likely to become law in 2026 and commence in 2027. Under the Health and Care Act 2022 a mandatory licensing scheme for non-surgical cosmetic procedures, including tattooing and piercings was being introduced by the Government. This was unlikely to come into effect until after the new unitary authorities had been set up under the Local Government Reorganisation arrangements in 2028.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

30. Forward agenda plan

The Committee received its Forward Agenda Plan.

It was resolved:

That the Forward Agenda Plan be noted with Consultation on Local Transport Authorities and the Licensing of Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles to be added to the list of items for the meeting on 18 March 2026.

The meeting concluded at 11:06 am

Chair.....

Date.....