



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 18 March 2026

Present:

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Christine Colbert (Substituting for Cllr Cane)
Cllr Lee Denney
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr Martin Goodearl (Vice Chair)
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

30. Apologies and substitutions

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

31. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes

The Committee received the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 11 February 2026.

It was resolved unanimously to agree the minutes of the Licensing Committee on 11 February 2026 as a correct record.

33. Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

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

The Licensing Manager, Stewart Broome, presented a report, AA166 previously circulated, which invited the Committee to finalise the Council's response to the Government's 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. It was noted that the deadline for responses was 1 April 2026.

The Committee were invited to ask questions to the Licensing Manager.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, the Licensing Manager explained that officers transferred from the Council to another authority will retain their terms and conditions under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations. However, officers may opt to leave their employment, which will lead to recruitment and training costs.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, the Licensing Manager explained that the report should refer to Cambridgeshire instead of Greater Cambridgeshire in paragraph 3.3 of the report, but this was not included in the Council's response to the Government's consultation in Appendix 1.

The Committee moved into debate.

It was agreed that the Council's response should not state that the Government's questions were impossible to answer. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the words "It is difficult to answer this question with any degree of certainty" should be used instead.

Cllr John Trapp stated that savings were likely to result from the Local Government Review as fewer managers would be needed, whilst if the Combined Authority took over responsibility for just taxi licensing, then an additional manager would be required. He suggested that this should be included in the response to the consultation. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the words "savings will already have been achieved by reducing from 6 licensing authorities to 2 or 3 following the Local Government Review", should be included in the Council's response to question 3. The Licensing Manager explained that the Council had a flat management structure, whilst the management structure at a unitary authority or the Combined Authority might require an additional manager above the licensing function, which could mean an increase in costs. The Committee agreed that reference to these potential extra costs should be included in the answer to question 2 of the consultation.

Cllr John Trapp expressed concern that focusing on just taxi licensing could create a monoculture and demotivated staff. Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith disagreed, stating that the variety of work in licensing, including enforcement meant that fears of a monoculture were unfounded. Cllr Mark Inskip agreed with

Cllr Ambrose Smith, as there was a need for specialists and it would not be useful to include this point in the consultation response.

Cllr Martin Goodearl suggested that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority did not have the infrastructure to take on responsibility for the taxi licensing function. Cllr Mark Inskip added that the responsibilities of the Combined authority were strategic, whilst this Council focussed on operational matters, such as determining taxi licence applications. It was agreed that this point should be added to the response to question 13 in the consultation response.

Cllr Julia Huffer expressed concern that making an authority, which had no prior experience of licensing administration, responsible for the issuing of thousands of taxi licences, could compromise the safety of passengers and drivers, especially as it was instigated by a government that was purely motivated by reducing costs.

Cllr Martin Goodearl suggested that making a single taxi licensing authority responsible for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough could increase the distance that taxi drivers will need to travel to get their licences. The Licensing Manager agreed and added that hackney drivers would be obligated to drive their passengers further distances if the district zones were abolished and hackney carriages would focus on the largest urban areas in the county, making it more difficult to hail a taxi in other areas. Cllr John Trapp expressed concern regarding the safety implications of enlarging the administrative area to the county, as it would result in the loss of local knowledge. Cllr Julia Huffer agreed and pointed out that this safety issue was covered in the answer to question 13.

Cllr Keith Horgan feared that the Government were only focussing on costs and were not considering the effect on safety and standards. He was proud of the service provided by the Council, which robustly and efficiently applied national policy. The Licensing Manager agreed and stated that there had been a large increase in the number taxi licences processed by the Council because it ran an efficient service. He informed the Committee that the Government's initiative would only reduce "out of area" working but would not eliminate it.

The Committee agreed that authority should be delegated to the Licensing Manager to include the amendments just decided by the Committee to Appendix 1.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Martin Goodearl seconded the recommendations, as amended. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed

to resolve:

to **Agree**

- A)** To delegate authority to the Licensing Manager to include the amendments agreed by the Committee to the wording

of the answers to questions one to four and thirteen to fifteen contained in Appendix 1; and

- B) To instruct officers to submit the agreed answers to the Government's LTA consultation prior to the 1 April 2026 deadline.

35. Licensing Manager Update

The Licensing Manager explained that the Tobacco and Vapes Bill had received its third reading in the House of Lords and was now being considered by the House of Commons. The new regulations were expected to be in force by the end of the year. He would keep the Committee updated on this matter.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee would be held on Wednesday 13 May at 10 am.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

The meeting concluded at 11:05 am

Chair.....

Date.....