

6 MARCH 2026

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee held on Friday, 6 March 2026

* Cllr Neil Tungate (Chairman)

* Cllr Richard Young (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Steve Clarke
Jack Davies
* Philip Dowd
* Allan Glass
* David Harrison
David Hawkins

Councillors:

Nigel Linford
* Colm McCarthy
* Dave Penny
* Alvin Reid
* Janet Richards

*Present

Also In Attendance:

Paul Osborne and Rob Scott (Taxi Trade Representatives)

Officers Attending:

Richard Knott, Joanne McClay, Peter Donelan, Richard Davies and Andy Rogers

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Davies, N Linford, and D Hawkins.

1 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2026 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made by any Members in connection with any Agenda Item.

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Two members of the public spoke under Agenda Item 4 (Licensing Fees and Charges 2026/27)

4 TAXI LICENSING FEES 2026 – 2027

The Committee heard representations from Mr Paul Osborne, Chair of the New Forest Taxi Operators and Drivers Association, representing a number of other persons in the trade, who was accompanied by Mr Rob Scott of Lymington Taxies. Their objection highlighted concerns about the rising costs associated with driver and vehicle licences, driver knowledge tests, and vehicle inspections. The trade

also objected to any further fee increases being introduced before a taxi tariff uplift was agreed and suggested that vehicle re-tests should be provided free of charge.

The Committee considered the proposed fees and charges for the taxi and private hire licensing function. The report also included a breakdown of associated Council costs for the service.

Members were reminded that at its last meeting, the Committee approved the proposed fees and charges for taxi and private hire function for 2026/27, subject to public consultation. It was noted that the Committee had a delegation from full Council agreed on 26 February to determine these fees after considering the objections, without further reference to the Council.

It was noted that Taxi licensing fees were not increased in 2025 whereas other licensing fees had been reviewed on an annual basis. It was pointed out that the Tariff review would only affect those drivers who operated Hackney Carriage vehicles and Private Hire Drivers would be free to set their own charges.

The Committee noted that the setting of the proposed licensing fees and charges had been through a rigorous process, to cost the delivery of the service at a time when service costs were increasing. Members considered the objections received to the proposed fees, together with the requirement for the cost recovery of the service.

Members acknowledged the concerns expressed by the taxi trade, and whilst the Committee generally supported the proposed scale of fees and charges to recover Council costs, it proposed that a review of taxi tariffs for Hackney Carriage be expedited, subject to support by the required bar of 70% of the trade.

In answer to a query, officers explained that the 70% bar existed so as to provide a check and balance across the trade, where there may be a difference of opinion on the benefits and impacts of raising tariffs.

Some members raised concerns about tariff increases, which ultimately would be borne by residents, some of whom were on limited incomes. It was also noted that recent global events had implications for petrol and diesel prices.

Members also discussed the merits of facilitating more regular tariff reviews, for example by the annual rate of inflation, and officers would investigate the feasibility of this and report back as part of the review.

RESOLVED:

1. That the objection made during the public consultation period in respect of the proposed fees for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences be noted.
2. That the recommended scale of fees and charges for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences for the financial year 2026/27, be agreed effective from 1 April 2026 as per Appendix 1 to the report.
3. That officers consult taxi operators in the District on their support for a review of taxi tariffs, and that if the 70% bar is reached in favour of a review, that officers expedite the review so far as possible and bring forward proposals to the Committee.

5 CHRISTA FERGUSON - LICENSING MANAGER - RETIREMENT

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Council's Licensing Manager, Christa Ferguson, was retiring in April.

Christa joined the Authority in 2017 and the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, wished to place on record his thanks for her excellent support, her highly professional approach and depth of knowledge, and he wished her well for the future.

CHAIRMAN