

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 March 2026 at 10.00 am

Present:-

Cllr D A Flagg – Chairman

Cllr A Keddie – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr A Chapmanlaw, Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr D Farr,
Cllr A Filer, Cllr M Howell, Cllr C Matthews, Cllr J Richardson and
Cllr L Williams

Cllr P Sidaway present via MS Teams

29. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Harman and P Hilliard.

30. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

31. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meetings held on 11 December and the Licensing Sub-Committees held on 10 and 16 December 2025, 7 and 21 January 2026 and 18 February 2026 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

33. Public Issues

There were no public questions, statements, or petitions for this meeting.

34. Taxi licensing fee setting 2026-27

The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager presented a report on the proposed fees for administering the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing regime, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council may set fees on a cost-recovery basis for licensing drivers, vehicles, and private hire operators. A review of current fees had been undertaken in light of increased operating costs, with proposed changes detailed in the report.

Driver licence fees (three-year licences) would take effect from 1 April 2026. Vehicle licence and Private Hire Operator fees required statutory consultation, including a 28-day public notice period, before implementation. The report outlined the reasons for the proposed adjustments, including increased time required for compliance checks, more accurate recording of officer time, and efficiency savings in some areas.

A Committee Member queried why the report had been brought to the Committee before the proposed fees had been subject to public consultation? They asked why the consultation could not be undertaken first, followed by a report to Committee, which might reduce the number of meetings required.

The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager explained that this approach reflected the process historically followed, although an alternative process could be adopted if permitted by the Council's Constitution. The Legal Advisor and the Clerk agreed to look into this matter further.

A Member asked whether there had been an increase in the number of Operators? The Licensing Manager explained that when BCP Council was first formed, a review had been undertaken to assess the officer time required to process applications. This assessment had since been re-evaluated, and it was now evident that significantly more officer time was needed to administer Operator licences. The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager further advised that the checks associated with these applications had become more time-consuming, particularly due to an increase in virtual Operator offices, which required additional verification and compliance checks to be carried out.

A Committee Member asked how the proposed fee increases might impact individuals during the current cost-of-living crisis? The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager explained that a needs assessment had been undertaken as part of the review and reiterated that the service was required to operate on a cost-neutral basis.

RESOLVED that having considered the proposed fees, members agree the proposed fees as set out in the report.

Post Meeting Note

The Clerk confirmed that the Constitution does not specify the order in which the Committee must consider officer reports or consultation outcomes when determining Taxi Licensing fees. As this is not prescribed constitutionally, the sequence is an internal process, which the Committee may amend if it considers it appropriate.

35. Review of the Hackney Carriage maximum fares and charges tariff

The Licensing Officer presented a report on the review of Hackney Carriage maximum fares and charges tariff, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Committee considered a request submitted by Mr David Lane, on behalf of the BCP Taxi and Private Hire Association, seeking amendments to the current Hackney Carriage tariff. Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council had the authority to set fare rates for Hackney Carriages operating within its area. Any approved changes would apply across all three existing Hackney Carriage zones within the BCP Council area.

The current tariff was last approved by the Licensing Committee on 7 March 2024. Mr Lane's request, along with supporting correspondence, was provided to Members, and he had been invited by the Chair to present the rationale for the proposed changes at the meeting. If no objections were received the changes would come into operation on the 5 May 2025.

Mr Lane addressed the Committee to provide further detail on the proposed increases to the Hackney Carriage fares. He referred to the ongoing pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis and explained that the request included amending the night-time tariff to bring it into alignment with neighbouring authorities, proposing that the night-time rate apply from 22:00 to 06:00.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Lane confirmed that all Hackney Carriage meters were calibrated by BCP Council and that the tariff changes at night were automatic and could not be manually overridden. He advised that, under the current arrangements, many Hackney Carriage drivers were choosing to take their breaks between 22:00 and 00:00 because the enhanced night-time rate did not commence until midnight. As a result, taxis licensed by neighbouring authorities were often picking up work within the BCP area between 22:00 and 00:00, which he considered to pose a potential risk to public safety, particularly for women. He stated that bringing the night-time rate forward to 22:00 would encourage more BCP-licensed drivers to remain available during these hours, thereby reducing reliance on out-of-area drivers.

It was also highlighted during the discussion that Hackney Carriages retained the option to offer reduced fares or discounts. The Licensing Manager clarified that Hackney Carriages licensed outside the BCP area were not permitted to operate from BCP taxi ranks; however, pre-booked Hackney Carriages could legally enter the area to collect passengers. No complaints had been received regarding out-of-area Hackney Carriages unlawfully operating from BCP ranks.

A Committee Member asked why officers do not provide recommendations within such reports? The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager explained that the licensing framework did not permit officers to express an opinion on matters of this nature. Decisions must be taken by the Licensing Committee, which operated in a quasi-judicial capacity and whose determinations may be subject to legal challenge. The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager stated that, in her view, agreeing to the proposals put forward by the taxi trade would bring BCP Council into alignment with neighbouring authorities. She added that members of the public have a wide range of transport options available to them and may choose whether or not to use Hackney Carriages.

RESOLVED that having considered the request for an adjustment in the current fares and charges, members agree the proposes fees as set out in the report.

36. Forward Plan

The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager took members through the Committee's Forward Plan, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The following updates were provided:

- The Pleasure Boats and Boatpersons Licensing Policy – The public consultation closed on 11 March 2026. The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager requested that the consultation results be presented to the Licensing Committee on 17 September 2026, as they would not be ready in time for the May meeting.
- Animal Licence Fees – The Licensing and Trading Standards Manager advised that a report would be presented to the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 20 May 2026 to consider the licensing fees for animal boarding establishments, including catteries, kennels, and home boarders.

Committee Briefings and Training Sessions 2026

Briefing Papers on the National Licensing Policy Framework and updated Section 182 guidance under the Licensing Act 2003, and the Tobacco and

Vapes Bill, had been circulated outside of the meeting. Members had no questions regarding the briefing papers.

Members were asked to contact the Clerk with any future training needs for scheduling after upcoming meetings.

RESOLVED that the updates to the Forward Plan be approved.

The meeting ended at 11.02 am

CHAIRMAN