

Minutes

Licensing Committee
Tuesday, 17 June 2025



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee members present

Councillor Paul Fellows (Chairman)
Councillor Robert Leadenhams (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Helen Crawford
Councillor Philip Knowles
Councillor Rhea Raysia
Councillor Susan Sandall

Officers

Chief Executive, Karen Bradford
Licensing Manager, Heather Green
Licensing Officers, Chris Clarke,
Elizabeth Reeve
Democratic Officer, Lucy Bonshor

Other Members

Councillor Ashley Baxter

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jane Kingman and Councillor Elvis Stooke.

2. Disclosure of interests

None disclosed.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2025

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2025 were proposed, seconded and agreed.

4. **Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 & Town Police Clauses Act 1847**

Decision

That the Licensing Committee:

- Notes the report and the impact of the implementation of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.***
- Agrees to have a workshop to collect evidence from taxi companies and licence holders on the introduction of the Policy changes and seek suggestions for further amendments.***

The Licensing Manager presented the report which provided the Committee with an update following the implementation of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which had been requested at the December 2024 meeting of the Committee.

The Department for Transport (DfT) had issued updated Taxi and Private Hire guidance in November 2023. The Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy had been reviewed and updated accordingly and approved by Council on 23 May 2024.

Notification had been issued to all licence holders outlining the main changes to the policy prior to its scheduled implementation date. Paragraph 2.2 of the report reflected the main feedback received at that time. A response to the points raised had been considered by a meeting of the Licensing Committee on 28 June 2024 where three drivers had attended the meeting to outline their concerns.

A further update was provided to Committee in December 2024 due to the continued concerns expressed by some drivers regarding fees and a driver approaching the media about the English test. The Committee had agreed to receive a further update at this meeting.

Recently concern had been expressed by some drivers regarding cross-border licensing and the potential impact on both businesses and potentially cheaper/less regulated or checks required by other Licensing Authorities as there was no national taxi policy or charging regime.

The report included a table showing the yearly averages for the number of licensed Drivers, Vehicles and Operators within South Kesteven. The average (April and May) figures had been included from 2025.

The Licensing Ream did not have discretion to deviate from the approved Policy. The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy makes definite statements, known as "bright lines" it can not fetter a Licensing Committee's discretion when making an individual determination.

Licensing authorities could depart from their own policy where they considered there were exceptional circumstances which warranted the departure. Since the current policy was implemented the Licensing Committee had determined the following:

- Two wheelchair accessible vehicles not meeting the Euro 6 standard
- One driver not wishing to take the driver proficiency test
- One driver failed the English proficiency test due to a medical impairment

A further update to the report presented in December 2024 taking into account the new policy requirements from 1 August 2024 on renewing drivers showed the following:

- Two renewal drivers had failed the driver proficiency test (both had not renewed their licences)
- One renewal driver had failed the English language test (passed on the second attempt) of the six that had undertaken the test since January 2025
- 35 drivers renewed their badge
- 16 drivers had not renewed
- Seven new drivers had applied and had been issued licences.
- There had been a net loss of nine drivers between December 2024 and May 2025.

It was noted that there were no restrictions within taxi legislation or regulations outlining where a private hire journey or pre-booked hackney carriage journey started or finished as long as the vehicle, driver and operator, if applicable, are licensed in the same licensing authority. Since the Deregulation Act 2015 the Government had acknowledged that this had exacerbated the issue creating a loophole within England and Wales allowing contractors to subcontract booking to operators licensed in a different district. The Government were being lobbied on this topic but at the present time South Kesteven District Council as licensing authority were unable to stop this practice.

The Licensing Manager then made reference to Wolverhampton and cross border work and referred to paragraph 3.5 of the report. It was noted that the Council's service provision was not subject to such a delay, even though it only had a small team and Officers could be contacted at any time during the process. The annual fees for 2025/26 were the same as 2024/25. It was proposed to add a third recommendation to the report that the Committee agrees to have a workshop to collect evidence from taxi companies and licence holders on the introduction of the Policy changes and seek suggestions for further amendments.

Councillor Rhea Rayside indicated that her husband held a Private Hire licence but this was with a different Council.

The Vice-Chairman spoke about the problems with cross border taxis illegally working in the district when large events were happening, due to the numbers they can't be policed which was frustrating.

It was stated that the Leader had written to the Secretary of State for Transport outlining the concerns with cross border licensing as there was no national policy and every area had their own policy.

One Member referred to the problems being encountered in Stamford with drivers from Rutland and Peterborough parking in loading bay areas in Red Lion Square. It was noted that Rutland had taken over the licensing on behalf of Peterborough who had the highest fees for the area.

The Licensing Manager had recently been to a meeting with an Officer from Lincolnshire County Council's highways to increase patrols in areas where problems were occurring to carry out enforcement. One Member of the Committee who has attended these meetings stated that he had been encouraged by the response from the Officer from the County Council and the offer of help. It was noted that South Kesteven covered a large area and it was difficult to carry out enforcement but work was being done to try and address concerns.

The Chairman referred to the recommendations contained within the report plus the third recommendation that had been suggested. The first recommendation was proposed and seconded.

The Leader who had attended the meeting acknowledged the information contained within the report but also commented on feedback that he had received from the taxi community following the changes that had been made to the policy and the perception from the taxi trade and that allowing the taxi license trade to express their concerns in an open forum may be a way forward.

The proposer of the recommendation amended it to include the third recommendation and this was also agreed by the seconder to the proposal and on being put to the vote, both proposals were unanimously agreed.

5. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent.

None.

6. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 10:26am.