

Brighton & Hove City Council

Licensing Committee

Agenda Item

(Non-Licensing Act 2003 Functions)

Subject: Taxi & Private Hire Licensing Annual Report 2025-2026

Date of meeting: 08 October 2026

Report of: Corporate Director of City Operations

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an annual update on the work of the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Team during the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It summarises the scale of the licensed taxi and private hire trade within the city, the number of licences in force, the volume of applications and licensing transactions processed, and the compliance, monitoring and enforcement activities undertaken during the year.
- 1.2 Taxi and private hire services form an important part of the city's transport network and provide an essential service for many residents, workers, and visitors. Maintaining a safe, reliable, and accessible taxi and private hire service contributes to the Council Plan objective of creating an accessible, clean, and sustainable city by supporting movement around the city.
- 1.3 Taxi and private hire services also support the Council's ambition of being a fair and inclusive city by helping people who may face barriers to travel, including older people, disabled residents, and those with limited transport options, to access employment, education, healthcare, and community services.
- 1.4 A sustainable and well-regulated taxi and private hire trade contributes to the Council Plan outcome of helping people live and age well by promoting independence, reducing social isolation, and supporting access to essential services. It also helps ensure the continued availability of licensed vehicles across the city, including wheelchair accessible vehicles, for residents and visitors who rely on them.
- 1.5 This report provides an overview of how the Council has discharged its licensing and regulatory responsibilities during 2025-26. It highlights the significant volume of licensing activity undertaken during the year, including the processing of 1,685 applications, renewals and associated transactions,

oversight of 2,025 licences in force, and the compliance and enforcement action taken where necessary to uphold licensing standards and protect public safety.

- 1.6 Whilst some historic comparative information is available and included where reliable, this is the first year in which this information has been reported in a consolidated annual format. Where reliable historic information is available, comparative data for 2023/24 and 2024/25 has also been included to begin identifying trends in licensing activity, licences in force, and compliance outcomes. The report therefore establishes a baseline against which future annual reporting can be compared and longer-term trends assessed. Detailed information regarding licences in force, licensing activity, compliance, and enforcement work is provided in Appendices 1 to 3.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is responsible for the licensing and regulation of taxi and private hire drivers, vehicles, and operators under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. The Council's role is to ensure that licensed drivers, vehicles, and operators meet the required standards of safety, suitability, and compliance with relevant legislation, licence conditions, and Council policies to protect the public.
- 3.2 The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Team consists of:

Staffing Resource	FTE
Senior Licensing Officer	1.0
Licensing Enforcement Officers	3.0
Regulatory Support Officer	1.0
Total Establishment	5.0

- 3.3 The team is responsible for administering and regulating more than 2,000 licences across drivers, vehicles, and operators, processing 1,685 applications and associated licensing transactions annually, investigating complaints and compliance concerns, undertaking enforcement, and safeguarding activities, and supporting Members through committee reports, policy development, and decision-making processes.
- 3.4 **Current licensed taxi and private hire trade:** As of 31 March 2026, there were 2,025 taxi and private hire licences in force within Brighton & Hove comprising driver, vehicle, and operator licences. These figures provide context for the scale of the licensed trade and the regulatory responsibilities undertaken by the Licensing Team.
- 3.5 The number of driver licences reduced from 1,239 in March 2024 to 1,051 in March 2026, whilst licensed vehicles reduced from 1,038 to 927 over the same period. These trends reflect continuing changes within the licensed trade and provide important context for the Council's licensing activities.

Licence Type	2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024
Taxi & Private Hire Dual Driver Licences	905	1015	1033
Private Hire Driver Licences	146	188	206
Taxi Vehicle Licences	562	596	596
Private Hire Vehicle Licences	365	434	442
Private Hire Operator Licences	47	59	68
Total	2,025	2,292	2,345

3.6 Overall, the number of taxi and private hire licences in force reduced from 2,345 in March 2024 to 2,025 in March 2026, representing a reduction of 320 licences (13.6%). The decline is evident across all licence categories and is proportionately most pronounced in private hire driver and operator licences. This reflects a continuing contraction in the licensed trade over the reporting period.

3.7 **Licensed activity during 2025-2026:** During the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the Licensing Team processed 1,685 applications, renewals, and associated licensing transactions. This demonstrates the significant level of administrative and regulatory activity undertaken each year in addition to compliance and enforcement functions.

Application Type	2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024
Taxi & Private Hire Dual Driver Licences	210	395	345
Private Hire Driver Licences	39	64	58
Taxi Vehicle Licences	661	707	692
Private Hire Vehicle Licences	396	406	408
Private Hire Operator Licences	12	6	16
New Driver Applications	62	72	79
Medical Assessments Processed	282	271	277
Wheelchair Exemption Applications	23	10	15
Total	1,685	1931	1890

3.8 All applications are subject to the relevant statutory checks and assessments, including identity verification, criminality checks, right-to-work checks, medical fitness assessments, and compliance with local licensing policies.

- 3.9 The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Team delivers a broad range of statutory licensing, compliance, and regulatory functions on behalf of the Council. During 2025-26, the service was responsible not only for processing applications and undertaking enforcement activity but also for delivering policy, regulatory and improvement work to support public safety and the effective regulation of the licensed trade.
- 3.10 In addition to its core licensing and enforcement responsibilities, the team delivered a number of significant projects and workstreams during 2025-26, including:
- Implementation and ongoing administration of national safeguarding and information-sharing requirements, including the National Register of Revocations, Refusals and Suspensions (NR3)
 - Organisation and chairing of the Brighton & Hove Taxi Forum, which provides a regular forum for engagement and communication between the Council, representatives of the taxi and private hire trades, Sussex Police and other stakeholders on matters affecting the licensed trade.
 - Delivery of vehicle, driver, and operator compliance programmes
 - Policy reviews and updates to licensing procedures and conditions where required.
 - Engagement with licence holders, trade representatives, neighbouring authorities, Sussex Police, and other partner agencies
 - Support for Licensing Committee and delegated decision-making processes.
 - Investigation and resolution of complaints and service requests from members of the public and stakeholders
 - Data reporting, performance monitoring and responses to government consultations and information requests, and
 - Joint working initiatives with partner agencies to support safeguarding, road safety, and public protection objectives.
- 3.11 The breadth of these responsibilities demonstrates that taxi and private hire licensing is not solely an administrative licensing function but a public protection service that combines regulatory oversight, compliance monitoring, safeguarding, partnership working, trade engagement and enforcement activity to ensure the continued provision of safe, reliable and accessible licensed transport services across the city.
- 3.12 **Compliance, enforcement, and decision making:** The Council has a duty to ensure that licensed drivers, vehicles, and operators continue to meet the standards required throughout the duration of their licence. A fundamental principle of taxi and private hire licensing is that licensed drivers must be and remain "fit and proper" persons. While the term is not defined in legislation, its purpose is to ensure that members of the public can travel safely and with confidence in licensed vehicles. Applicants are responsible for satisfying the Council that they are safe and suitable to hold a licence.
- 3.13 Where concerns arise, the Council has a range of enforcement powers available, including verbal and written warnings, suspension, revocation, or refusal of licences in accordance with its Licensing Enforcement Policy. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the individual

circumstances of each matter and the need to protect public safety.

- 3.14 Enforcement cases are investigated by officers, with formal decisions taken by authorised managers in consultation with Legal Services where appropriate. More complex or sensitive cases may involve multi-agency working, including safeguarding partners and Sussex Police, particularly where there are concerns relating to the safety of children or vulnerable adults.
- 3.15 In addition to investigating complaints and intelligence received throughout the year, officers undertake routine compliance and enforcement activity including:
- Vehicle inspections and compliance checks;
 - Verification of driver documentation and licence conditions;
 - Monitoring of taxi ranks and known hotspot locations;
 - Investigation of allegations of unlawful plying for hire and ranking offences;
 - Joint operations with Sussex Police and neighbouring licensing authorities;
 - Safeguarding and road safety interventions; and
 - Follow-up investigations arising from complaints, collisions, criminal matters, and intelligence reports.
- 3.16 A summary of complaint and enforcement activity is provided at Appendix 3.
- 3.17 Officers also undertake regular out-of-hours enforcement operations, including weekday evenings and weekends, when demand for licensed vehicles is typically highest.
- 3.18 **Safeguarding and information sharing:** Safeguarding and public protection remain central to the taxi and private hire licensing regime. Licensing authorities are required to share information relating to serious safeguarding and road safety concerns and to consider such information when determining licence applications and reviewing existing licences.
- 3.19 Since April 2023, all licensing authorities in England have been required to use the National Register of Revocations, Refusals and Suspensions (NR3), administered by the National Anti-Fraud Network. Authorities must record driver licence refusals, suspensions and revocations relating to safeguarding and road safety matters and must check the register when considering all new and renewal driver licence applications.
- 3.20 These requirements sit alongside wider duties introduced under the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022, which require licensing authorities to share information about serious safeguarding and road safety concerns involving drivers licensed by another authority and to consider whether regulatory action is required in response. This framework supports a consistent national approach to safeguarding and public protection.
- 3.21 **Enforcement outcomes 2025-2026:** During 2025-26, a total of 48 formal enforcement outcomes were recorded against drivers and applicants. These included suspensions, revocations, and refusals where officers determined that intervention was necessary to protect the public or uphold licensing standards.

Enforcement outcome	2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024	Trend
Licence suspended pending further information	41	30	38	Increasing
Licence suspended	3	4	15	Decline
Licence revoked	3	5	2	Fluctuating
Licence refused (new applicant)	1	0	0	Low volume
Total	48	39	55	Fluctuating

3.22 The principal reasons for action included medical fitness concerns, failure to provide required medical or DBS information, breaches of licensing conditions, safeguarding concerns, conduct matters and road safety issues. Enforcement action was taken in accordance with the Council's Licensing Enforcement Policy and statutory responsibilities.

3.23 Of the 1,051 licensed taxi and private hire drivers in force as of 31 March 2026, 48 were subject to a formal enforcement outcome during the year, representing approximately 4.6% of the licensed drivers. Conversely, around 95.4% of licensed drivers were not subject to any formal enforcement action. It should also be noted that the enforcement figures include a number of precautionary suspensions pending receipt of information and do not necessarily indicate misconduct. The data therefore demonstrates that formal regulatory intervention was required in only a small proportion of cases, whilst the vast majority of licence holders continued to comply with licensing requirements and maintain the standards expected of licensed drivers

3.24 The volume of applications received demonstrates the ongoing administrative and regulatory workload undertaken by the Licensing Team in addition to enforcement and compliance activity. All applications are subject to the relevant statutory checks and suitability assessments to ensure public safety and compliance with the Council's licensing policies.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 **Trends within the licensed trade:** The data shows a continuing reduction in the overall size of the licensed taxi and private hire trade within Brighton & Hove. Between March 2024 and March 2026:

- Taxi and Private Hire Dual Driver Licences reduced from 1,033 to 905, a decrease of 128 licences (12.4%)
- Private Hire Driver Licences reduced from 206 to 146, a decrease of 60 licences (29.1%)
- Private Hire Operator Licences reduced from 68 to 47, a decrease of 21 licences (30.9%)
- Private Hire Vehicle Licences reduced from 442 to 365, a decrease of 77 licences (17.4%) and
- Taxi Vehicle Licences reduced from 596 to 562, a decrease of 34 licences (5.7%).

- 4.2 Overall, the total number of licensed drivers reduced from 1,239 in March 2024 to 1,051 in March 2026, representing a reduction of approximately 15%. Over the same period, the total number of licensed vehicles reduced from 1,038 to 927, a reduction of approximately 11%. The number of licensed operators reduced by approximately 31%.
- 4.3 Whilst the Council does not routinely collect information on the reasons individual licence holders leave the trade, these reductions are consistent with wider challenges reported across the taxi and private hire sector. A range of factors may be contributing, including increasing vehicle operating costs, fuel and insurance costs, vehicle replacement costs, changing travel patterns, competition from neighbouring authorities and ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining drivers. Continued reductions in driver, vehicle and operator numbers may present future challenges around service resilience, particularly during peak tourism periods, major events, and the night-time economy. The Council will continue to monitor capacity and engagement with the trade to ensure the city's transport needs can continue to be met.
- 4.4 **Impact of Reductions in Drivers and Vehicles:** The reduction in licence numbers has been accompanied by a reduction in demand for licences. New driver applications reduced from 79 in 2023/24 to 62 in 2025/26, a decrease of approximately 22%. This suggests that fewer individuals are entering the trade, which if the trend continues, has the potential to affect the availability and resilience of the city's taxi and private hire services.
- 4.5 A smaller driver workforce may result in longer waiting times for passengers at peak periods, reduced availability of vehicles during evenings and weekends, and greater pressure on existing licence holders to meet demand. Reduced capacity may have a disproportionate impact on residents who rely on taxis as an essential mode of transport, including older people, disabled people, and those with limited access to alternative transport options.
- 4.6 A reduction in the number of licensed vehicles may also affect overall service availability across the city, particularly during periods of high demand associated with major events, tourism, and the night-time economy. Whilst the current licensed fleet continues to provide citywide coverage, maintaining a sustainable taxi and private hire trade remains important to ensuring that residents and visitors can access safe and reliable transport services.
- 4.7 The reduction in licensed vehicles is particularly noteworthy given that Brighton & Hove operates a controlled taxi vehicle licensing system and there continues to be a waiting list for taxi vehicle licences. Where licensed vehicles have left the trade, opportunities have been offered to individuals on the waiting list to obtain replacement licences. However, there has been little or no take-up of these opportunities.
- 4.8 This suggests that wider economic and market factors, rather than licence availability, may be influencing decisions about entering or remaining within the trade. The lack of demand for newly available vehicle licences may reflect the costs associated with purchasing and maintaining a compliant vehicle, insurance costs, vehicle finance arrangements, fuel and operating expenses, and broader economic conditions affecting the sector.
- 4.9 The current position indicates that the principal challenge is not the availability

of taxi licences but the willingness and ability of proprietors and drivers to invest in and operate licensed vehicles within the current economic environment. Whilst there is currently sufficient capacity to maintain taxi services across the city, these trends will continue to be monitored as part of the Council's ongoing oversight of the licensed trade. This represents a notable change from the historic position where demand for available vehicle licences routinely exceeded supply.

- 4.10 **Licensing Workload and Service Demand:** Whilst the size of the licensed trade has reduced, the Council's regulatory responsibilities remain unchanged. The service continues to undertake statutory licensing, safeguarding, compliance, and enforcement functions to ensure that licensed drivers, vehicles, and operators remain safe, suitable, and compliant throughout the duration of their licences.
- 4.11 During 2025-26, the service continued to make a significant contribution to public safety and safeguarding through the effective regulation of the licensed trade. Regulatory interventions ensured that drivers who were unable to demonstrate continued compliance with medical, criminal records or other licensing requirements were prevented from undertaking licensed work until concerns had been resolved. Information sharing with other licensing authorities and partner agencies supported the identification and management of safeguarding and road safety risks, helping to prevent unsuitable individuals from obtaining or retaining licences. Ongoing engagement with trade representatives through the Taxi Forum also provided a mechanism for communicating regulatory requirements, discussing emerging issues affecting the sector and promoting compliance. Collectively, these measures strengthened public protection, supported confidence in licensed transport services, and helped ensure that licensed drivers and operators continued to meet the standards expected by the Council and the travelling public
- 4.12 Vehicle-related licensing activity accounted for the majority of work undertaken. taxi and private hire vehicle transactions represented 1,057 applications, approximately 63% of all licensing transactions processed during the year. Medical assessments accounted for a further 282 transactions.
- 4.13 The data demonstrates that reductions in licence numbers do not necessarily result in corresponding reductions in workload. All applications, renewals, compliance checks, safeguarding enquiries, complaints, and enforcement matters continue to require officer assessment and regulatory oversight. The service therefore continues to manage a significant workload despite reductions in the size of the licensed trade.
- 4.14 **Enforcement and Compliance Analysis:** A total of 48 formal enforcement outcomes were recorded during 2025-26. Of these, 41 (85%) involved suspensions pending receipt of further information, typically relating to medical fitness assessments, DBS documentation, or other compliance requirements. Only three cases resulted in licence revocation and one application was refused. This indicates that most enforcement interventions were preventative and compliance-based, aimed at ensuring continued compliance with licensing requirements and protecting public safety.
- 4.15 The data indicates that a significant proportion of enforcement activity relates to ensuring ongoing compliance with licensing requirements rather than

serious misconduct. However, the use of suspension powers remains an important safeguard, enabling the Council to act promptly where concerns arise whilst investigations or additional checks are completed.

- 4.16 The relatively small number of revocations and refusals should not be viewed in isolation. Taxi and private hire licensing operates as a preventative regulatory regime, with application checks, criminal record checks, medical assessments, safeguarding processes, compliance inspections, and partnership working all contributing to the early identification and management of risk.
- 4.17 The enforcement figures therefore indicate that the Council continues to maintain effective oversight of licence holders and intervene where necessary to uphold public safety and licensing standards.
- 4.18 Looking ahead to 2026-27, the Council's strategic focus will be on maintaining a safe, accessible, and sustainable licensed trade in response to ongoing changes within the sector. Priorities will include monitoring the impact of declining licence numbers on service capacity and resilience, supporting the transition to lower-emission vehicles, strengthening safeguarding arrangements in line with national developments, improving digital licensing processes, and working with the trade to better understand recruitment and retention challenges. The Council will also continue to monitor the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles to help ensure that licensed transport services remain inclusive and meet the needs of residents and visitors
- 4.19 **Alternative options:** This report is presented for information only and no decision is required. No alternative options have therefore been considered.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Licensing Team routinely engages with licence holders, trade representatives, Sussex Police, neighbouring licensing authorities, and other stakeholders in the exercise of its statutory functions.
- 5.2 No formal consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report as it is presented for information only.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications as this report is for information purposes only.

Name of finance officer consulted: David Wilder
Date consulted (09/09/2026)

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council has statutory responsibilities for the licensing and regulation of taxi and private hire drivers, vehicles and operators under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. The activities outlined in this report are undertaken in accordance with those statutory powers and duties.

- 7.2 This report is for information only and does not require Members to make a regulatory decision.

Name of lawyer consulted: Rebecca Sidell
Date consulted (03/09/2026):

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 Taxi and private hire services provide an important form of transport for many residents, particularly older people, disabled people, and those who may face barriers to using other forms of public transport.
- 8.2 The Council's Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Team helps ensure that services are safe, accessible, and available to those who rely upon them. Compliance and enforcement activity also contributes to the protection of vulnerable passengers by ensuring that drivers remain fit and proper persons and that safeguarding standards are maintained.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 A safe, reliable, and sustainable taxi and private hire trade forms an important part of the city's wider transport network, supporting residents, businesses, and visitors to travel throughout Brighton & Hove.
- 9.2 The licensing framework also supports the Council's environmental objectives through the regulation of licensed vehicles and the delivery of vehicle standards approved by the Council.

10. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

- 10.1 There are no direct social value or procurement implications arising from this report.

Crime & disorder implications:

- 10.2 Licensing and enforcement activity contributes to the prevention of crime and disorder by ensuring licence holders remain suitable to hold licences and by addressing safeguarding and public safety concerns where they arise.

Public health implications:

- 10.3 A safe and accessible taxi and private hire service supports access to healthcare, social care, and other essential services, particularly for residents with limited transport options.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Team continues to deliver a substantial programme of licensing, compliance, and enforcement work to support public safety and maintain confidence in the licensed trade.
- 11.2 During 2025-26, the team maintained effective oversight of the licensed trade

through the delivery of policy, compliance, safeguarding, and regulatory work. This was supported by enforcement activity and engagement with licence holders and stakeholders through the Council's Taxi Forum, the team also continued to deliver its statutory responsibilities and wider public protection functions across the licensed trade.

- 11.3 The report demonstrates the breadth of the Council's taxi and private hire licensing responsibilities and the important role that licensing plays in maintaining a safe, reliable, and accessible service for residents and visitors.

Supporting Documentation

Appendix 1: Licence comparison data

Appendix 2: Licensing activity and demand comparison data

Appendix 3: Compliance and enforcement activity comparison data

