

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Regulatory & Appeals Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Wednesday 10th June 2026 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Councillors Neil Drayton (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), John Baxter, James Cantwell, Anne Dorrian, Stuart Evans, Paul Gleeson, Jonathan Noble, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

In attendance: Senior Licensing Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

7 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Austin BEM and Dale Broughton.

8 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

9 Minutes

A query was raised in relation to the minutes of the previous meeting concerning the confidentiality of voting undertaken during private deliberation during that meeting. It was alleged that a Councillor who was not a member of the Committee and therefore not part of the private deliberation had publicly circulated information about the way in which individual councillors had voted and had also disclosed the addresses of some members.

The Vice-Chairman confirmed that clarification would be sought regarding the disclosure of such information and the matter would be investigated further.

Subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

11 Maximum Hackney Carriage Fare Structure

The Committee received a report from the Senior Licensing Officer which provided an overview of a proposed increase to the maximum hackney carriage fare structure for fares which begin and end in the Borough of Boston. This was following a request submitted by the Boston Hackney Carriage Association (BHCA).

Members were advised that the last increase to fares had been implemented in August 2022 and that the purpose of the report was to consider the proposed variation of fares and, if appropriate, make a recommendation to Cabinet for approval. The matter would

then be determined by Cabinet and thereafter subject to statutory consultation, including public advertisement and the opportunity for objections.

The increase in fares was recommended for approval and the Committee was advised that it could also consider alternative tariff rates, not to approve an increase in tariffs and, although not recommended, a decrease in the current tariff. It was confirmed that the Council had the power to set maximum fares for time and distance for hackney carriage fare rates and that it was unlawful for drivers to charge above the maximum set. Confirmation was provided that this applied only to hackney carriage fares and not private hire rates, which drivers were permitted to set independently.

The Committee was informed that the proposed changes included increases to distance and waiting time charges across all tariffs, amendments to the commencement times for certain tariffs, an increase to the maximum booking fee, and an uplift in the initial fuel surcharge.

It was further noted that consultation had been undertaken with all licensed hackney carriage drivers and proprietors, with three responses received from approximately 138 consultees.

Confirmation was provided that the rate of diesel fuel costs had increased from approximately £105 in 2022 to £112 for a full tank, based on a car with a 60-litre tank. Other increased running costs, including insurance, maintenance wages and general cost of living increased were also relevant.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed that the key issue for the Committee was to balance a reasonably priced service for customers with a fair and suitable income for drivers and proprietors.

The Vice-Chairman invited deliberation of the report.

During consideration of the report, Members undertook a detailed discussion on the three current tariffs set out in part 2.2 within the report. In addition, the proposed fare increases and revised tariffs were considered, including the scale of the uplift and its potential implications for both hackney carriage drivers and members of the public using their services.

Members explored the methodology behind the proposed increases and sought clarification on how the new tariffs compared with existing charges.

Consideration was also given to the information about benchmarking of tariff rates with those in neighbouring authorities. It was noted that, under the proposed structure, fares within the Borough would become significantly higher than those in comparable parts of Lincolnshire.

Discussion took place regarding the balance required between ensuring a viable income for drivers in the face of the increased costs for their business and maintaining an affordable service for residents.

Members recognised that operating costs for the trade had increased in recent years, including fuel prices, insurance and general cost of living pressures. Members expressed a

range of views which included those which considered the changes proportionate and those who expressed the view that the scale of the increase may be excessive.

The competitive nature of charges and passenger choice were considered, including that individual operators were private businesses which could consider whether they wished to increase their fares to the proposed maximum proposed or a rate between the current rate and the proposed maximum. The passenger choice between private hire and hackney carriages was also considered. The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed that a total of 389 vehicles were licensed, which comprised 124 hackney carriage licenses and 265 private hire licenses.

Consideration was given to the effect of compounded inflation since the last fare increase in 2022.

The Committee considered the limited response to the consultation and the absence of detailed supporting evidence from the BHCA to justify the level of increase sought. Members noted that the proposal had some background information which had been submitted without detailed financial breakdowns of the increases in operating costs.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact on residents, particularly those in rural areas and those who were disadvantaged and may rely more heavily on taxi services, including elderly and vulnerable individuals.

It was acknowledged that hackney carriage fares represented a maximum and that drivers were free to charge lower amounts; however, some Members expressed the view that market forces may not sufficiently mitigate the impact of a high maximum tariff.

The Committee discussed the timing of fare reviews across local authorities, including Boston and whether more regular, incremental increases would be more appropriate than larger increases considered over longer intervals. The potential benefit of introducing an annual review process was noted.

Members considered a range of the options available to the Committee, including approving the proposal, amending the proposal and tariff, or deferring the matter to allow for further information to be obtained.

Following detailed discussion, Members expressed the view that additional evidence and engagement with the BHCA would assist in reaching an informed decision.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe and seconded by Councillor John Baxter. Following a vote, the recommendation was not passed.

An alternative motion to defer consideration of the matter and seek the attendance of the BHCA at a subsequent committee meeting was proposed by Councillor Neil Drayton and seconded by Councillor Jonathan Noble.

Resolved:

That consideration of the proposed increase to the maximum hackney carriage fare structure be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee to allow:

- further engagement with the Boston Hackney Carriage Association about the concerns raised during the meeting;**
- the provision of additional supporting evidence in respect of the proposed increases; and**
- attendance by a representative of the Association to address Members' questions at the deferred meeting.**

The Meeting ended at 2.49 pm.