

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Annual Report – Licensing Service

12 March 2026

Report of Senior Licensing Officer

Annual Report

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an annual report to members of Licensing Committee on private hire/hackney carriage related matters, including volume of applications, complaints, and enforcement activity.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That members note the contents of the report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At the meeting of Licensing Committee on 3rd February 2022 members approved the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy. Point 3.13 of the policy states the following in terms of reporting on Licensing Authority performance.

Licensing Officers will provide an annual report to the Licensing Committee outlining the number of private hire/ hackney carriage related applications received, the determination of those applications, and highlighting the number of applications where the decisions were made not in accordance with the Councils policy.

The report will also provide details of the number of complaints received in respect of drivers/ vehicles and operators and an overview of the nature of complaints and how the complaints were dealt with.

The annual report will also include an overview of any legal cases and appeals.

1.2 Attached at **Appendix 1** is a summary of all the information collated.

1.3 The report covers the calendar year 1st January 2025 – 31st December 2025.

2.0 Applications

- 2.1 The Licensing service deals with a variety of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire applications, many of which are determined by Officers under delegated powers. Members are only party to decision-making in certain circumstances, it is therefore important to highlight the volume of applications received, the outcomes and highlight any exceptional cases. This will assist when reviewing application standards and the hackney carriage and private hire licensing policy.
- 2.2 The table below shows the type of licences currently issued by Lancaster City Council and administered by the Licensing service; it equates to 888 active hackney carriage and private hire related licences in the Lancaster district.

Type Of Licence	Total no. active licences 2025 figures (2024 figures)	Duration (licence length)
Private Hire Drivers	31 (31)	1 or 3 Years
Hackney Carriage Drivers	19 (22)	1 or 3 Years
Dual Licensed Drivers (HC and PH)	438 (429)	1 or 3 Years
Private Hire Vehicles	238 (254)	4/6/12 Months
Hackney Carriages	110 (108)	4/6/12 Months
Private Hire Operators	52 (51)	1 or 5 Years

- 2.3 There has been 50 new drivers', 27 new vehicles and 15 new operator licences issued in the last calendar year.
- 2.4 Licences are subject to renewals, if a matter arises upon application to renew a driver's licence that may call into question the driver's fitness, e.g. a relevant conviction or motoring offence; this decision is delegated to Licensing Committee. If the renewal application meets the required standard, officers administer and issue the licence. A total of 103 drivers renewed their licence in 2025. (Hackney carriage, private-hire and dual)
- 2.5 Members have been required to determine 1 driver renewal application in 2025. The driver had received a driving offence for using a mobile telephone whilst driving a vehicle. Members departed from Council policy (as permitted) and the licence was granted.
- 2.6 Members were required to review the suitability of 5 licensed drivers which resulted in the following decisions:
- 1 resulted in an immediate revocation
 - 1 resulted in a revocation (without immediate effect)
 - 1 was suspended until the completion of a Taxi Driver Proficiency Course
 - 1 was issued a formal warning
 - 1 received no further action,

Usually, these cases are referred to Licensing Committee following a series of complaints or significant events that question an individual fitness to remain licensed.

In accordance with the requirements of the Councils Constitution, the Licensing Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Licensing Committee is delegated to

revoke driver licences with immediate effect when there is an immediate risk to public safety. When an immediate revocation takes place the urgent decision is required to be reported to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee.

In 2025 there have been 4 instances where the Licensing Manager in consultation with the Chair of Licensing Committee has made the decision to revoke a dual drivers licence with immediate effect. The reasons for each decision taken are as follows:

- 1 x driver arrested for possession with intent to supply drugs and theft
- 1 x driver tested positive for Cocaine whilst driving a vehicle
- 1 x driver arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving (resulted in no further action/decision remains)
- 1 x driver arrested for the possession of indecent imagery

2.7 Vehicle licences are renewed at 4/6/12 monthly periods depending on the age of the vehicle, therefore each of the 348 licenced vehicles have renewed their licence at least once within the 12-month period.

Vehicles are tested prior to licensing by the Councils Vehicle Maintenance Unit. The total number of vehicle tests carried out, including retests, tests following an accident and standard testing in relation to age of vehicle is 875.

3.0 Summary of Complaints

3.1 There has been a total of 122 complaints reported to the Licensing team in the last 12 months. (01 January 2025 - 31 December 2025).

The type of complaints typically falls into the following categories and the numbers represent how many complaints per subcategory. Complaints have mostly been made by members of the public however there are occasions when operators raise concerns and complaints in reference to other operators.

Public Safety (11) some examples have included not wearing a seat belt, driving without due care, using a mobile phone whilst driving and attention and advertising as a private hire operator on social media without the relevant licences. Furthermore, there have been 5 complaints that have led to driver licences being immediately revoked and they include: arrested for death by dangerous driving, arrested for the possession of indecent imagery, inappropriate behaviour towards a female customer, arrested for the possession with intent to supply and arrested for testing positive of a Class A drug whilst driving.

Other (23) the sale of hackney plates without the vehicles, hackney carriage drivers not following taxi rank protocols, over ranking, playing loud music when carrying a paying customer, lack of customer service and a licensed private hire vehicle that is advertising signage of a taxi (hackney carriage).

Uber/Out of Town Vehicles (64) The Licensing Service are copied into emails to other licensing authorities in relation to out-of-town vehicles not displaying the correct signage which we record. The out-of-town licensed vehicles are required to adhere to their own licensing authority policies and not the policies of Lancaster City Council. The standards set by Lancaster City Council, such as door signage and the positioning of plates may not be the same standards set by other licensing authorities.

Several complaints received relate to allegations of Uber/Out of Town vehicles working

in the Lancaster District/importuning for hire. A driver and a vehicle licensed by one local authority can pick up and drop off passengers in another local authority's area, if the booking is made through an operator licensed by the same authority. There have been 6 complaints made that show evidence of an out-of-town vehicle being available for hire on a Lancaster taxi rank. When such reports are made, the Licensing Service make a request to the licensing authority of the vehicle/driver under the Data Protection Act for the driver's personal information, such as name and home address. Licensing Officers then issue a warning letter to the driver in question.

Violence and Aggression (13) Some examples are threats being made between licensed drivers, racist comments made towards other drivers, a verbal altercation between a licensed driver and a Blackpool licensed driver.

Overcharging (6) All the complaints for over charging have been allegations that the driver has charged customers more than the metered fare.

Not displaying badge/tariff (5) The complaints related to vehicles displaying expired plates

- 3.2 When the licensing service receives a complaint, it is allocated to an investigating officer. That officer then collates all relevant information, which can include obtaining CCTV, statements from witnesses, liaison with Police and checking booking records etc. Part of the process is to also inspect the internal client records of the licensed driver/operator. This may show the complaint as a one-off incident or highlight a pattern of behaviour which is of concern. It is those cases that are presented to Licensing Committee.
- 3.3 Licence holders are notified of any complaint made against them and given the opportunity to respond to any allegation made, in addition, witnesses are often sought; in most reported complaints, it is one parties word against another and difficult to prove/disprove any wrongdoing. That is the importance of up to date, thorough record-keeping, so trends or pattern of behaviour can be identified, and the appropriate course of action swiftly taken.
- 3.4 As part of the updated licence conditions for Private hire operators (PHO), they must adopt, implement, review, and update their customer service and complaints policy which includes managing the conduct of drivers and the timeframe for responding to complaints. Listed in the conditions are specific requirements in relation to the handling of complaints and the operator responsibilities. At least every 6 months, the PHO must submit the complaint log to the licensing service.

This will assist the Licensing Authority in ensuring all relevant matters are recorded on the client (driver) records and discussed with the operator to ensure complaints are handled in a consistent, fair manner.

Licensing Officers will be sending reminders to operators at 6 monthly intervals to ensure that they submit the complaint logs to the Licensing team.

4.0 Enforcement/Compliance Activity

- 4.1 The licensing team undertake a variety of enforcement duties, of both a proactive and reactive manner. Activity is carried out by Council Officers but can involve other agencies such as the local Police, DVSA and Lancashire County Council.

The main purpose of licensing enforcement is to:

- Secure the health, safety and welfare of members of the public who either make use of the licensed activity or who are affected by it in some way.
- Deal immediately with serious risks.
- Promote and achieve sustained compliance with the law.

4.2 Proactive inspections have been carried out on licensed vehicles totalling 119 inspections. Most inspections have been satisfactory. There have been 12 vehicles issued with defect notices; the notice gives the vehicle proprietor a fixed period to ensure repair to the vehicle is made. Defects have included bodywork damage and replacement of expired fire extinguishers.

There have been 29 vehicles that have been suspended, all were due to not having a valid insurance certificate, vehicles being off road due to accident damage and poor vehicle standards.

4.3 Licensing Officers have carried out 9 Private Hire Operator inspections. 8 operators were compliant to Licensing Officers' satisfaction. Licensing staff advised 1 private hire operator that improvements were required.

5.0 Appeals Hearings

5.1 There have been no appeal hearings in 2025.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 There are 888 active hackney carriage and private hire licences operating in the Lancaster district. The Licensing service are responsible for the administration, compliance and enforcement associated within the relevant licensing regime and legislation for each of those licences.

6.3 The private hire and hackney carriage licensing policy became effective on 1st April 2022, since then the licensing service has worked alongside the local trade to ensure compliance, with awareness and education being a priority. Investigations and inspections are important to ensure compliance from licence holders; the policy will be reviewed by members of the Licensing Committee in 2026.

6.4 Licensing officers are proactively and reactively responding to reports and complaints to ensure public safety is maintained at all times.

6.5 The Licensing team have received several complaints in relation to Uber/other local authority licensed vehicles working in the Lancaster District. A driver and a vehicle licensed by one local authority can pick up and drop off passengers in another local authority's area, if the booking is made through an operator licensed by the same authority. If a member of the trade observes and can provide specific evidence of such vehicles plying for hire (picking up passengers/not pre-booked) it will be subject to a full investigation. Sightings of such vehicles will not be investigated.

6.6 The Licensing Work Plan 2026 sets out planned work to be carried out throughout the year, this includes the review of vehicle licensing procedures, review of the hackney carriage and private hire policy, review of the hackney carriage rank provisions and a Multi-Agency vehicle operation.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(Including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety,
Sustainability and Rural Proofing):**

None identified

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified

**OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services,
Property, Open Spaces**

None identified

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The report is for noting, no comments required.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The report is for noting, no comments required.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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