

LICENSING COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Licensing Committee was held on Monday 2 February 2026.

PRESENT: Councillors L Lewis (Chair), J Cooke, J Ewan, P Gavigan, TA Grainge, D Jones, J Kabuye, J McTigue and J Platt

PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER: G Hallet – Legal Services

OFFICERS: J Dixon, T Hodgkinson, R Johansson and T Durance

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors S Hill, T Livingstone, M Nugent and A Romaine

25/74 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed those present and highlighted the Council's Fire Evacuation Procedure.

25/75 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

25/76 **MINUTES - LICENSING COMMITTEE - 15 DECEMBER 2025**

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 15 December 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

25/77 **LICENSING UPDATES**

The Licensing Manager provided an update which included notification that a Private Hire Vehicle Driver Licence had recently been revoked with immediate effect following information received from Cleveland Police in relation to a serious alleged offence.

The Licensing Manager further reported that a separate Private Hire Vehicle Driver Licence had also been revoked with immediate effect following reports from two separate occasions concerning inappropriate comments made by the driver.

The Council's Legal Representative advised the Committee that two appeals had been lodged with the Crown Court against previous decisions of the Licensing Committee to refuse applications for Private Hire Vehicle Driver Licences. It was reported that both appeals had been dismissed and that the Crown Court had upheld the decisions of the Licensing Committee.

NOTED

25/78 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED**

There were no urgent items.

25/79 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

ORDERED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

25/80 **APPLICATION FOR PRIVATE HIRE OPERATOR LICENCE REF: 1/26**

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing submitted a report in relation to the application for a Private Hire Operator Licence, Ref: 1/26, highlighting the circumstances that

required the Committee's special consideration.

The Chair introduced those present and outlined the procedure to be followed. The applicant, who attended the meeting accompanied by his wife, verified his name, address, and confirmed he had received a copy of the report. He advised that he had not brought a printed copy of the report to the meeting but confirmed that the report was available to him electronically on a laptop brought to the meeting.

The Licensing Manger presented the report which outlined the application for a Private Hire Operator Licence in respect of proposed operating premises. The applicant had attended an interview with the Licensing Manager in January 2026 to discuss the application and the proposed operating model.

Members were advised that the applicant intended to operate a private hire business using an app-based booking system, with bookings managed electronically rather than through a traditional call-handling arrangement. It was explained that the business would initially operate with a limited number of vehicles and would not operate a public-facing booking office.

Members were informed that discussions had taken place between the applicant, Licensing Officers and Planning Officers prior to submission of the application. Planning Officers had advised that the existing planning use of the premises did not permit use as a traditional private hire base. However, it was confirmed that a Private Hire Operator Licence could be granted subject to conditions restricting the use of the premises. These conditions were listed in the report.

It was explained that the proposed conditions would limit the use of the premises to administrative functions only, with no customer access, no booking staff operating from the premises, and no attendance by private hire drivers or vehicles. Members were advised that, subject to these restrictions, there would be no adverse impact on nearby residents.

Members were advised that the applicant had satisfied all relevant pre-application requirements, including disclosure and barring checks, safeguarding training, right-to-work-checks and the Private Hire Operator knowledge test.

The applicant and his wife spoke in support of the application and responded to questions from Members, Council's Licensing Manager and Council's Legal Representative.

It was confirmed that there were no further questions and the applicant, his wife, and Officers of the Council, other than representatives of the Council's Legal and Democratic Services teams, withdrew from the meeting whilst the Committee determined the application.

Subsequently, all parties returned, and the Chair announced a summary of the Committee's decision and highlighted that the applicant would receive the full decision and reasons within five working days.

ORDERED that the application for a Private Hire Operator Licence, Ref No: 1/26, be granted, as follows:-

Authority to Act

1. Under Section 55 of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 ("the Act"), the Committee may decide to grant a private hire vehicle operator licence only if it was satisfied that:-
 - the applicant was a fit and proper person to be granted such a licence; and
 - if the applicant was an individual, that the applicant was not disqualified by reason of the applicant's immigration status from operating a private hire vehicle.
2. The Committee considered Section 55 of the Act, the Middlesbrough Council Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Policy 2022 ("the Policy"), the report and representations made by the Applicant and his wife.
3. The application was considered on its own particular facts and on its merits.

Decision

4. After carefully considering all the information, the Licensing Committee decided to grant the application for a Private Hire Vehicle Operator licence, with added conditions detailed below, on the grounds that it was satisfied the applicant was a fit and proper person to be granted such a licence.

Reasons

5. The Applicant, along with his wife, who would assist in running the business, intended to operate under a trading name (supplied by the applicant) with an office base at the trading premises (address supplied by the applicant).
6. At the Committee hearing, Members were informed by the Licensing Officer that prior to the application being made, there had been discussions between the Applicant, Licensing and Planning Officers. The current Planning use for the office base did not allow for use as a 'Traditional' Private Hire Base, with a customer waiting area, staff and driver facilities.
7. Planning Officers stated that they would be satisfied that a Private Hire Operator Licence could be granted if the following conditions were attached to the licence:
 - That the Operating base was used only to locate the automated Private Hire Booking system.
 - That no booking staff/telephone operators were allowed at the premises.
 - That customers were not permitted to visit the premises and that no customer waiting area was permitted.
 - That no Private Hire Drivers or Vehicles were permitted to visit the premises.
8. The Licensing Officer further informed the Committee that the Applicant had successfully completed all the pre-application requirements, including DBS checks, Safeguarding Training, Right to Work checks and Private Hire Operator Knowledge Tests.
9. At Committee, the Applicant provided a detailed plan of how the business would operate and what it would look like in practice.
10. The Applicant informed Members that they were willing to adhere to the conditions set by Licensing and the modified conditions proposed by the Planning Officers, whilst reiterating that they would strictly follow the rules and regulations required of them.
11. Questions were asked around the plans for the business, which need not be included in detail within this decision.
12. However, Members did question where the Applicant would meet proposed employees/drivers of the business, as they could not do so at the operator trading base premises. The Applicant explained that they were currently meeting potential drivers in local cafés and a meeting room at the current workplace of his wife.
13. The Applicant further explained how they would ensure the safety of the drivers and passengers through the use of an "SOS" button contained on the designated booking app.
14. The Applicant further answered questions on the complaints procedure they would adopt as well as questions on their proposed app-based system.
15. Members queried what the Applicant would do regarding operating premises, should the business grow significantly. The Applicant was confident that there would be a transition to an alternate premises, which could accommodate 'Traditional' Private Hire Base, should this be the case.
16. The Committee was satisfied that the application was in keeping with the standards required of Private Hire Vehicle Operator, licensed by Middlesbrough Council.
17. The Committee further determined that the Applicant was fit and proper to hold a licence and that there were no immigration status issues.

18. Having considered all the above, the application was granted with the addition of the aforementioned conditions attached to the licence.
19. The decision was final and there was no internal or statutory route of appeal, however, the Licensee had the option of judicially reviewing the lawfulness of the decision to the high court if grounds had been made out. If the Licensee decided to challenge the decision by way of judicial review he may wish to seek independent legal advice as to the grounds and time limits that may apply. If the Licensee decided to take this course of action the Council would apply for any costs it incurred in defending its decision.