STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 22 October 2026
Time: 6.00pm
Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Peter Clark (Vice-Chair), Claire Parris, Jody Hanafin, Rob Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Jaysica Marvell, Ricki Rands and Graham Spencer

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.00pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Lynda Guy and Dermot Kehoe.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 14 April 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference be noted.

4 HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF REVIEW

The Committee received a report on the annual review of Hackney Carriage fare tariffs. Members were advised that two options had been subject to public consultation. The first was to increase the initial fare from £3.90 to £4.10, representing an average increase of 2.51% across Tariffs 1, 2 and 3, or retaining the existing fares.

The report also proposed increasing the soiling charge from £50 to £100 to reflect cleaning costs, vehicle downtime and loss of earnings. The report also explained introducing a temporary fuel surcharge of 40p per journey when the UK average diesel price reached £1.79 per litre, with zero and ultra-low emission vehicles exempt.

It was noted that the consultation results showed that 43% of respondents supported increasing the initial fare, while 57% favoured retaining the current tariff. Responses on the soiling charge were divided, with 33% favouring no change, 32% supporting an increase to £70 and 35% supporting an increase to £100. Officers recommended increasing the soiling charge to £100. The Committee was invited to determine the

fare tariff, the introduction of the temporary fuel surcharge and whether the soiling charge should be increased.

Members discussed the consultation responses and noted the importance of balancing affordability for passengers with the rising operating costs faced by drivers. It was acknowledged that the responses from Hackney Carriage drivers were closely divided on the proposed fare increase, while more members of the public supported retaining the existing tariff.

In response to a question regarding the proposed fuel surcharge, officers confirmed that the diesel price would be used as the benchmark, but the surcharge would apply to both petrol and diesel vehicles, with zero and ultra-low emission vehicles exempt. Members were advised that diesel vehicles continued to represent a significant proportion of the licensed fleet.

Members also queried the proposed increase in the soiling charge from £50 to £100, including how the amount had been calculated and whether it was supported by the trade. Officers explained that comparisons had been undertaken with other local authorities and that the proposed charge reflected professional cleaning costs, vehicle downtime and drivers' loss of earnings. The charge had also been discussed at taxi forums, where £100 had been considered a reasonable amount.

Members also raised the importance of ensuring that Hackney Carriage drivers remained competitive with private hire services such as Uber and Bolt. Officers advised that a direct comparison had not been undertaken as part of the report, as these services used variable pricing based on factors including demand and journey circumstances, making comparisons with fixed Hackney Carriage tariffs difficult.

Members questioned the range of organisations consulted, particularly GP surgeries and faith groups. It was noted that the consultation had been publicised in the Comet and at the Customer Service Centre at the Council Office. Members offered to assist in identifying additional contacts for future consultations.

Members discussed whether the proposed 40p fuel surcharge would remain appropriate if fuel prices continued to rise. Officers provided examples of approaches adopted by other local authorities, including flat-rate surcharges and incremental increases linked to fuel prices, and explained that the proposed flat rate was intended to be straightforward for drivers and customers.

Members raised questions about the impact of the increase in drivers operating costs and the affordability of fares for passengers. It was noted that the proposed review period may not adequately reflect ongoing changes in fuel prices. Members therefore suggested reviewing the surcharge after four months and exploring an incremental mechanism linked to fuel prices to avoid the need for repeated reviews.

Members thanked officers for the report and commended the thoroughness of the research undertaken.

It was **RESOLVED** that Option 1 in the report be approved which detailed an increase in the initial fare by 20 pence (£3.90 to £4.10) which would increase Tariffs

1, 2 and 3 by an average of 2.51%. The Soiling Charge would also increase from £50 to £100 and there would be an introduction fee of 40p per journey when the average UK price of diesel reached £1.79 per litre, based on the UK Government's weekly road fuel prices. (Zero and Ultra-low emission vehicles would be exempt). These would take effect from 10 November 2026.

It was further noted and agreed that a review would be taken after four months, given the volatility of fuel prices. Officers advised that the review would consider fuel costs and taxi tariffs in comparison with other local authorities, with a further report presented to the Committee.

5 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. Under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports (if any) being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR