

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S **REPORT TO LICENSING & PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

13th January 2026

Report Title: Government Consultations responded to in consultation with Chair of the Committee and Portfolio Holder

Submitted by: Licensing Lead Officer & Service Director – Regulatory Services

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres & Growth

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To update Members of four recent Government Consultations that relate to current and proposed licensing regimes, that have been responded to.			
<u>Recommendation</u> That Committee: 1. Note the contents of the report.			
<u>Reasons</u> The Government have recently held four open consultations. Two in relation to taxi licensing, one in relation to the Licensing Act 2003 framework and one in respect of a proposed licensing scheme for Tobacco & Vapes. All four consultations were responded to by Council officers with approval being provided by the Chair of the Committee and Portfolio Holder.			

1. Background

- 1.1** On 16th July 2025 the Government's Transport Committee published an 8-week call for evidence into the adequacy of the current taxi licensing regime.
- 1.2** On 21st July 2025 the Department for Transport published a 10-week consultation which sought views on proposals relating to 'automated passenger services' and supporting the deployment of commercial self-driving pilots.
- 1.3** On 25th September 2025 the Department for Business and Trade launched a 6-week consultation that sought views on proposals from recommendations made by the industry led taskforce in relation to the Licensing Act 2003 framework and 'Reforming the Licensing System'.

- 1.4 On 8th October 2025 the Department for Health & Social Care published an 8 week consultation for evidence to support the Tobacco and Vapes Bill that was passing through Parliament.

2. Issues

- 2.1 At the Licensing & Public Protection Committee meeting on 19th August 2025 Members approved a recommendation that would allow Officers to draft responses to the two taxi related consultations and then have them reviewed by the Chair of the Committee and Portfolio Holder prior to submission. This was due to the discrepancies between the end date of the consultations and the Council's Committee calendar.
- 2.2 A copy of the Council response to the Transport Committee's call for evidence is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 2.3 A copy of the Council response to the Department for Transport's consultation is attached as **Appendix B**.
- 2.4 The Department for Business and Trade consultation was released 2 weeks prior to the last Licensing & Public Protection Committee meeting however it had not been reviewed and considered by officers until mid-October, and due to the short consultation period Officers' were not able to bring the matter before the full Committee. Officers did draft a response and sought approval from the Chair of the Committee and Portfolio Holder before submitting. A copy of the Council response is attached as **Appendix C**. The Government are moving at pace with proposed changes and published the 'National Licensing Policy Framework' on 26th November 2025 which will be subject of a future report to Committee.
- 2.5 The Department for Health & Social Care consultation for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill was released on the date of the last Licensing & Public Protection Committee meeting and as such opened and closed without Officers' being able to present a report to Members prior to submission. However, Officers did draft a response and sought approval from the Chair of the Committee and Portfolio Holder before submitting. A copy of the Council response is attached as **Appendix D**. Whilst the consultation was wide-ranging and covered the whole of the Bill, the Officers' response focused solely on the proposal to implement a licensing scheme for Tobacco and Vapes products. The Bill does not explicitly state which layer of local government will be the 'licensing authority' however it is considered likely that it will be the Borough/District and Unitary tier.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Committee note the contents of the report.

4. Reasons

- 4.1 Officers' view is that it is important that the Council continue to respond to Government Consultations to help influence and shape future policy, guidance and legislation in protecting the public and promoting economic growth.

5. Options Considered

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

6.1 There are no legal or statutory implications directly from responding to Government consultations, however the resulting changes to licensing policy, guidance and legislation may have a profound impact upon the service.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 Not considered as the Government have conducted their own assessments as part of the individual consultations.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 There are no finance and resource implications directly from responding to Government consultations, however the resulting changes to licensing policy, guidance and legislation may have a profound impact upon the service.

8.2 Changes to the licensing framework for taxis may result in extra training requirements for officers, members and the trade. It may also require procurement for goods and services, and a Council consultation on taxi licensing policy.

8.3 Changes to the licensing framework under the Licensing Act 2003 may result in extra training requirements for officers and members, and more applications being made to the Council which would require resource to administrator.

8.4 The introduction of a licensing framework for the sale of Tobacco & Vapes products may require substantial resource on training for all parties, administering any transitional arrangements for existing premises and administering the regime moving forward.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

9.1 Not applicable.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

One Digital Council ☒

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Sustainable Council ☒

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 Not applicable.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

13.1 [Licensing & Public Protection Committee 19th August 2025](#)

14. List of Appendices

14.1 Appendix A – Response to Transport Committee consultation
 Appendix B – Response to Department for Transport consultation
 Appendix C – Response to Department for Business and Trade consultation
 Appendix D – Response to Department for health & Social Care consultation

15. Background Papers

15.1 [Licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles - Committees - UK Parliament](#)
 15.2 [Automated passenger services: permitting scheme - GOV.UK](#)
 15.3 [Reforming the licensing system - GOV.UK](#)
 15.4 [Tobacco and vapes: evidence to support legislation - GOV.UK](#)