

LICENSING

Committee

17th December 2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Andrew Fry (Chair), and Councillors Joe Baker, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Pattie Hill, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Alan Mason and Yvonne Smith

Officers:

J Bayley, C Flanagan and S Garratt

Committee Officers:

I Westmore

7. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Roger Hill and Luke Stephens.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the 11th July 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10. STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES

The Committee was advised of the outcome of the recent consultation exercise undertaken with stakeholders in relation to the 2013-2016 Statement of Gambling Principles. It was noted that no consultation responses had been received within the prescribed timescales.

Members asked several questions of clarification around the terminology within the draft Statement of Gambling Principles but no changes were recommended.

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Chair

RECOMMENDED that

the outcome of the consultation exercise be noted and the 2013-2016 Statement of Gambling Principles be adopted from January 2013.

11. ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE GROUP - REFERRAL REPORT

Members received a referral report setting out the findings of the review undertaken by the Access for Disabled People Task Group, including two recommendations for the consideration of the Licensing Committee.

The Task Group was concerned that there was a relatively low number of adapted vehicles within the hackney carriage and private hire vehicle fleet within the Borough and considered whether incentives might encourage local taxi firms to increase this number. The primary means of encouraging the expansion of the adapted vehicle fleet was the offering of licences to operate adapted vehicles for a longer period of time than standard vehicles. The Licensing Committee unanimously supported the offering of extended licences to those operating adapted vehicles.

A second recommendation from the Task Group proposed that drivers be offered disability awareness training. The training would be provided by or through the Council and individual taxi drivers or their taxi companies would be expected to meet the cost of the training. For this reason it was proposed that the training not be made mandatory.

Members of the Licensing Committee were generally of the opinion that the disability awareness training should be made mandatory for those drivers who operated adapted vehicles, although it was recognised that there was an issue with multiple drivers using particular vehicles.

Given that both of the recommendations proposed by the Task Group would amend the Borough's existing Taxi Licensing Policy, Officers confirmed that each would be subject to a 12 week consultation period with interested parties. It was further agreed that both should be the subject of a further report from Licensing Officers in order that further detail of the available options might be provided to Members.

RESOLVED that

Officers prepare a further report setting out the options for

- 1) the offering of licences to operate adapted vehicles for a longer period of time than for standards vehicles to incentivise taxi firms operating within the Borough to increase the number of adapted vehicles in their fleets; and**
- 2) offering disability awareness training to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle drivers operating within the Borough;**

to be submitted to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee.

12. FEEDBACK FROM THE UNICORN HILL TAXI RANK CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Members received a report following the 12 week consultation on proposals to amend the arrangements for short stay parking and the hackney carriage rank on Unicorn Hill. The Committee was reminded that this matter had been the subject of previous consideration by the Licensing Committee. Officers added that the taxi rank at the Bus Station would be closed for a limited period this winter.

Mr Laight, representing the interests of the petitioners supporting the reduction of the taxi rank on Unicorn Hill by the removal of four spaces during the day, argued that in the daytime the rank was not usually full. As the rank was only partly used it was contended that the effect of the change would not be significant.

Mr Nadeem Naz, representing the Redditch Taxi Association, noted that there were large numbers of taxis in the town but only limited numbers of spaces in which to wait. Unicorn Hill was reported to be one of the busiest ranks and was usually full. Parking was unavailable on the opposite side of the street. The addition of speed ramps to Unicorn Hill had already served to reduce the number of spaces on the rank.

Members discussed the proposals, some arguing that it was reasonable to remove these four bays during the daytime to assist businesses on Unicorn Hill. By contrast, it was also noted that the existing short-stay parking spaces on Unicorn Hill were under-used, indicating that there was not a clear need for further spaces. The speed ramps were also observed to have effectively removed

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several spaces on the rank already and, linked to the works to the bus station, it was suggested that this was not the time to be reducing the size of the rank.

Following a vote on the matter it was

RESOLVED that

the taxi rank on Unicorn Hill not be reduced by four spaces during the daytime.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.01 pm

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Chair