

LICENSING
COMMITTEE

11th March 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Andrew Fry (Chair), Councillor Luke Stephens (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Michael Chalk, Pattie Hill, Roger Hill and Gay Hopkins

Officers:

C Flanagan, S Garratt and S Alom

Committee Officer:

P Ross

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Joe Baker and Juliet Brunner.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the 17th December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16. PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE POLICY - MULTI SEATED WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

Members received a report in respect of a proposed 12 week consultation with the taxi trade and other agencies on the draft Private Hire Vehicle Policy, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

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Chair

The Licensing Manager presented the report and in doing so highlighted that following on from the Licensing Committee meeting on 17th December 2012; and in response to the review undertaken by the Access for Disabled People Task Groups recommendations. Officers had been tasked to prepare a report setting out the options for the offering of licences to operate adapted vehicles for a longer period of time than for standard vehicles.

The Licensing Manager informed Members that the Access for Disabled Task Group had expressed concern at the relatively low number of adapted vehicles currently in the taxi fleet that operated in Redditch. The Task Group believed that it would encourage an increase in the number of adapted vehicles if the Council offered an extended period of time for adapted vehicles and extended the 9 year period currently offered to 12 years from the date of first registration.

In response, Councillor P. Hill highlighted that Members of the Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis) had recently discussed with officers the recent increase in the number of age exemption vehicles being presented to the Sub-Committee.

The Licensing Manager responded to Members' questions with regard to the 12 week consultation period and the possibility of reducing the consultation period to 6 weeks. There followed further discussion in respect of a proposed reduction in the consultation period and the number of drivers, owners and agencies to be consulted with. The Licensing Manager clarified that a 6 week consultation period was sufficient for officers to consult with the taxi trade and other agencies.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Officers undertake a 6 week consultation with the taxi trade and other agencies on the draft Private Hire Vehicle Policy; and**
- 2) Officers prepare a report detailing the findings of the 6 week consultation to be submitted to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee.**

17. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE - DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

Members received a report that provided an update on the work undertaken by licensing officers in identifying a suitable training provider to administer disability awareness training on behalf of Redditch Borough Council to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers and to consult with the Redditch Taxi Trade on the introduction of Disability Awareness training.

The Licensing Manager presented the report and in doing so highlighted that following on from the Licensing Committee meeting on 17th December 2012; and in response to the review undertaken by the Access for Disabled People Task Groups recommendations. Officers had been tasked to prepare a report setting out the options for offering disability awareness training to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle drivers operating within the Borough. The Licensing Manager drew Members' attention to the Task Group's recommendation that any training offered either by or on behalf of Redditch Borough Council should not be mandatory.

The Licensing Manager informed Members that from the information gathered from the training providers contacted; Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Driver Training could undertake the Disability Awareness Training on behalf of Redditch Borough Council in the most efficient, convenient and cost effective manner to both the drivers and the Local Authority. The training could be provided at a cost of £20.00 per person with the fee paid directly to WCC Driver Training. The Licensing Manager further informed Members that WCC Driver Training had suggested a room be made available at Redditch Borough Council. This would enable the training to be delivered within the locality.

The training would provide Redditch taxi drivers with the knowledge and skills required, as detailed at section 3.9 of the report, to transport customers who may have a disability both safely and confidently. Attendees would receive a certificate of attendance. The training would also ensure compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Redditch Borough's Hackney and Private Hire conditions of licence.

The Principal Solicitor advised Members that, as detailed in the report, a consultation period of 12 weeks would be required as the recommendation may constitute a change to licensing policy in the Borough. All interested parties; taxi drivers, vehicle owners, taxi operators, West Mercia Police and groups representing people with disabilities would need to be consulted with.

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Members questioned if all drivers would be required to undertake the training or only those who drove wheelchair accessible vehicles. The Licensing Manager clarified to Members that all drivers would be required to undertake the training.

The Licensing Manager responded to Members' questions in respect of the cost to the authority in providing a room for the training, taking into account the number of sessions that would be required if all drivers were to receive the training. The Licensing Manager informed Members that approximately 30 to 40 drivers would be trained at each session. The Principal Solicitor drew Members' attention to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and that by providing a room and endorsing the training; the Authority would be paying due regard to the needs of people with disabilities living in the Borough in line with these legislative requirements.

Further discussion followed on the Task Groups recommendation that the training should not be made mandatory. Members agreed that given the low cost of the training; and taking into account that other Licensing Authorities across the county had a mandatory requirement of some form of disability awareness training, the training should be made mandatory.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Officers undertake a 12 week consultation with the Redditch Taxi Trade on the proposal to make disability training awareness a mandatory requirement for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers in the Borough; and**
- 2) Officers prepare a report on the findings of the 12 week consultation to be submitted to a future meeting of the Licensing Committee.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.31 pm