

Licensing Committee

1st July 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), Councillor Alan Mason (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, Michael Braley, Michael Chalk, Andrew Fry, Pattie Hill, Wanda King and Brenda Quinney

Officers:

K Barnett, S Garratt and D Etheridge

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

18. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Gay Hopkins.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 11th March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21. LICENSING ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered an update on the functions carried out under the Licensing Act 2003, the Gambling Act 2005 and other aspects of licensing during the preceding year and significant issues anticipated in the coming year.

Officers explained that the on-going transference of data to new software had resulted in some of the reported figures being slightly

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Chair

out of date. It was noted that the main activities undertaken within the Licensing function were reported and that other, ancillary activities were excluded at present. The Committee was informed that such information could be included within future Annual reports whilst still retaining the summary nature of the report.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the contents of the Licensing Annual Report 2012/13 be noted; and**
- 2) **future Annual Reports provide an overview of the broad scope of licensing activities undertaken by the Council.**

22. PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE POLICY - MULTI SEATED WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES - CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

The Committee considered a report detailing the responses received to a consultation with the taxi trade on the draft Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy. It was reported that 17 responses to the consultation had been received and Members were asked to consider the draft Policy in the light of these comments.

Members noted that the majority of the consultation responses were apparently written by the same individual and the view was expressed that this should be a consideration when assessing how much weight to give them. Officers confirmed that these responses, although written in the same hand, had been received from different individuals. It was reported that the majority of respondents were supportive of the changes which reflected the fact that they were generally of benefit to taxi drivers and operators.

The ordering of the bullet points within the draft Policy was discussed as it was felt that, with regard to the rules governing the licensing of vehicles more than 9 years old, the present order was open to misinterpretation should the points not be considered in conjunction with each other.

Members were very supportive of the draft Policy and the underlying rationale behind it, that of encouraging an increase in the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles in the Redditch Private Hire fleet. It was suggested that a similar Policy change be introduced for Hackney Carriage vehicles and this also received general support. A Member suggested that the twice-yearly testing of vehicles within three years of their first registration was a somewhat onerous burden on drivers and operators and that a relaxation of the testing regime be introduced for the first 18 months – two years. To that end, Officers were asked whether mileage data

for taxis tested by the Council within their first three years of registration might be submitted to a future Committee meeting for consideration.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the draft Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy at Appendix 1 (attached) be approved to come into effect from 1st August 2013, subject to the amendment of the ordering of the bullet points as noted in the preamble above;**
- 2) **consultation take place with the taxi trade over amendment of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licensing Policy to bring it into line with the Policy adopted for Private Hire Vehicles with respect to age extensions for adapted vehicles; and**
- 3) **Officers explore the feasibility of presenting mileage data for vehicles tested within three years of their first registration to a future meeting of the Committee.**

23. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING - CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Members considered a report which set out the responses to further consultation with the local taxi trade, this time with regard to the introduction of mandatory disability awareness training for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers within the Borough.

Of the responses received, most were generally in favour of the proposal, although there were concerns raised over a number of issues such as the additional cost to drivers and the applicability of equivalent disability awareness training. The Committee was clear that the training should be a mandatory requirement although it was stressed that the training should cover all forms of disability.

It was explained that the proposed training would be of an afternoon's duration, would cost each driver £20 and would be undertaken by the Worcestershire County Council Driver Safety Team. Officers provided basic information on the content and cost of the Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Vehicle Driving which provided equivalent training in disability awareness and undertook to provide Councillor Alan Mason with further detail following the meeting. The Committee discussed the timescales within which it was hoped that all taxi drivers might be trained and were advised that, from a practical and legal perspective, the end date should provide a reasonable opportunity for all drivers to undertake the training. It was proposed that a minimum of 12 months should be

given and that a figure be incorporated in the draft Policy which was to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Council proceed with the proposal to make disability awareness training a mandatory requirement for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers in the Borough, excepting those drivers who can demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that they have undertaken equivalent disability awareness training (e.g. Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Vehicle Driving); and**
- 2) **a report setting out the draft Policy on disability awareness training for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.**

24. LICENSING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2013/2014

Members noted the Committee Work Programme for the coming year. Officers highlighted that there would be an item coming forward relatively soon in respect of legislation concerning the licensing of scrap metal dealers. It was anticipated that this report would require consideration prior to the next scheduled meeting in November and it was therefore proposed that an additional meeting be arranged prior to November which would consider this matter and the Policy on Disability Awareness Training.

RESOLVED that

subject to the amendments set out in the preamble, above, the Committee Work programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.48 pm

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Chair