

Licensing Committee

14th July 2011

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Michael Braley (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Anita Clayton, Malcolm Hall, Bill Hartnett, Roger Hill, Alan Mason, Phil Mould and Jinny Pearce

Also Present:

Councillor Juliet Brunner (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety & Regulatory Services)

Officers:

C Flanagan, S Garratt, N McMenamin and G Revans

Committee Officers:

D Sunman

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Anderson, Fry and R King.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 17th January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. PETITION - UNICORN HILL TAXI RANK

The Committee considered a petition requesting the re-siting of the Hackney Carriage rank on Unicorn Hill or restricting its hours of operation.

Members were informed that the petition had been received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 24th May 2011 and had been referred to this Committee, as the appropriate body, for further consideration.

.....
Chair

The Petition Organiser attended the meeting and outlined the concerns of the business owners / traders located on Unicorn Hill regarding the detrimental effect on trade which had arisen since a taxi rank had been sited on the left side of Unicorn Hill (looking down from the churchyard). He reported that several businesses had been forced to close and that the concern of local businesses was that, due to lack of parking, more would follow. He asked that consideration be given by the Council to re-siting the taxi rank (perhaps to the station car park or Bates Hill) or restricting the time of their rank usage to 5.30pm onwards and that consideration of providing some 'short stay' parking bays in Unicorn Hill would be helpful.

Members were informed that following receipt of the petition a consultation exercise had been carried out with the relevant agencies, which included West Mercia Police, West Mercia Road Traffic Management Police, Redditch Taxi Association and Worcestershire County Council (WCC). The consensus amongst those consulted was that the current location of the taxi rank was the most ideal location to service travellers on that side of the town.

Officers reported that in a previous consultation carried out in 2003/04 WCC Highways Department had advised that it would not be legally possible to provide road markings for short term parking in the day time and a taxi rank at night because of the different road markings that would be required.

Members were informed that the suggestion by the petitioners to move the rank to the station car park was not viable as the Council has no right of access to Private Land and previous enquiries had resulted in a negative response from the land owners.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Petition and the report be noted; and**
- 2) no further action be taken.**

5. VEHICLE INSPECTION FEE STRUCTURE - PETITION AND OBJECTIONS

Councillor Alan Mason declared that he might have a pre-determined view in relation to this agenda item as he had attended meetings with Redditch Taxi Association. He took no part in any discussion regarding this item and was not involved in the decision made.

The Committee considered objections received to the proposed fees structure for vehicle inspections following the publication of the statutory notice as required by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

Officers reported that the fees originally proposed had been set at £50 each for a Vehicle Inspection and a Vehicle Inspection Re-test. Following verbal objections by taxi drivers these fees had been reconsidered and had been amended to:

Vehicle Inspection Test	£50
Vehicle Inspection Re-test	£25

These amendments had been advertised and consulted upon.

Members were informed that the amended fees were in line with those charged by other local authorities within Worcestershire and reflected the actual cost of the work which would be undertaken at Crossgates Depot.

A new post had been created at Crossgates Depot to carry out 6 monthly testing of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle fleet, including re-tests and accidental damage tests. Detailed costings for the new post were circulated to members.

The Committee heard representations made on behalf of Redditch Taxi Association and their suggestion that the fee for the Vehicle Inspection Test be set at £37 with no additional charge for a re-test, should one be required.

Members agreed that they did not have sufficient detailed information on costs to be able to make an informed decision on the issue. They requested that Officers prepare a further report for discussion at a later meeting.

RESOLVED that

an additional meeting of Licensing Committee be convened on Thursday, 11th August 2011 at 7.30pm to consider a further report on the Vehicle Inspection Fee Structure.

6. STREET TRADING POLICY - REVIEW

The Committee received a report on a review of the current Street Trading Policy.

Officers reported that the current Street Trading Policy and its fee structure had not been reviewed since its introduction in 1989.

The Committee's approval was sought of the following documents to allow a twelve week public consultation exercise to take place:

- Street Trading – Policy Statement (Appendix 1)
- Street Trading – Information Pack (Appendix 2)
- Street Trading – Standard Conditions (Appendix 3)

Members noted that Appendix 3 of the report included the new proposed fees structure for Street Trading Consents.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the contents of the draft Street Trading Policy Statement, the draft Customer Information Pack and the draft Standard Conditions, attached as Appendices 1 to 3 of the report, be approved; and**
- 2) the approved draft versions of the documents, as specified in 1) above, be subject to public consultation, such consultation to take place over a 12 week period with the responses being reported back to the Licensing Committee.**

7. LICENSING ACT 2003 - HALF YEARLY REPORT

The Committee received a review of the functions carried out in relation to the Licensing Act 2003 by the Council and other responsible authorities over the previous six months.

Inspector Ian Joseph of West Mercia Police provided an update on the Police's activity in relation to licensing matters. He reported that the amount of crime associated with the Night Time Economy in Redditch town centre had reduced from 6.1% of the total crime in 2008/09 to 5.3% in 2010/11. He reported that the majority of the offences in the town centre were assault and public order offences and that 14% of reported incidents had related to drugs offences. He reported that this increase in drug offences was as a result of high profile operations that had targeted the supply of drugs and led to increased detections.

Inspector Joseph informed members by the Partnership Analyst that two local premises had been identified where crime and disorder might occur. The Police and the Local Authority would be working together to address the issues.

He reported that another initiative, Operation Vellum, had been successful in dealing with increased concerns regarding a group of people regularly breaching the Designated Public Place Order

(DPPO) in and around Redditch town centre by drinking alcohol and engaging in antisocial behaviour.

With regards to taxi licensing Inspector Joseph highlighted the ongoing tension concerning taxi test fees and his concerns that drivers might cause significant disruption on the roads or withdraw their services on key nights of the week in pursuit of their grievances.

Inspector Joseph provided a brief update on organisational developments affecting licensing and, in particular, that Redditch shares a Licensing Officer with the rest of the County.

The Senior Licensing Practitioner reported on behalf of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Trading Standards that a full report would be made to the January meeting of this Committee.

Members were informed that a report had been received from the Senior Community Safety Project Officer, Redditch Borough Council and that this report would be circulated with the minutes.

RESOLVED that

the six monthly report on the Licensing Act 2003 be noted.

8. LICENSING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

Members received an update on the Committee's Work Programme 2011/12.

Members agreed that the following items be added to the Work Programme:

Date of Meeting	Title of Report	Comments
11th August 2011	Vehicle Inspection Fee Structure	Additional meeting
10th October 2011	Presentation on Regulatory Committee	
9th January 2012	Street Trading Policy	

RESOLVED that

the report be noted and the suggested amendments be included in the Work Programme.

Appendix 1: Licensing Act 2003 Cardiff Report Update - Minute 7 above refers

The Meeting commenced at 7.30 pm
and closed at 9.38 pm

.....
Chair