

MINUTES of a meeting of the LICENSING COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Councillor J Clarke (Chairman)

Councillors N Smith, E G C Allman, D Everitt, T Eynon, M French, M D Hay, K Merrie MBE, V Richichi, A C Saffell, S Sheahan and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr L Mansfield, Mr A Cooper, E Tomlinson, Mr T Delaney and Mrs R Wallace

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors D Harrison, B Harrison-Rushton, G Hault and J Hault.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Wyatt declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 – Licensing Update Report as a Premise licence holder.

11. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019.

It was moved by Councillor J Clarke, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE POLICY AND CONDITIONS

The Environmental Health Team Manager presented the report.

The report outlined the results of a consultation of private hire drivers and changes in policy to a number of areas including age of vehicles, emission standards, safeguarding, and in-vehicle equipment. He also confirmed the timings of when proposed changes to conditions would come into effect as set out on page 11 of the report.

In response to a question from Councillor N Smith, the Environmental Health Team Manager confirmed that the impact of policy changes on taxis are measured by recording the percentage that pass a depot inspection at the first attempt. He also informed the committee that this is currently at 76.9% which was the best it had been since the Licensing Team started recording this in 2016 and in some months, this had even reached the mid-eighties.

In response to a series of questions from Councillors M Wyatt, D Everitt and Smith; the Environmental Health Team Manager and Licensing Team Leader confirmed the stance of the Licensing Team on tinted windows. As set out on page 32 of the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Policy Hackney Carriage Vehicle Conditions of Licence attached as Appendix 1 of the Environmental Health Team Manager's report.

In response to a question from Councillor V Richichi, the Licensing Team Leader confirmed that outside of renewals and regular checks, vehicles were periodically spot checked but there were limits set in legislation as to how many times this could be carried

Chairman's initials

out in a year. He also stated that his report in item 5 provided several examples of spot checks over the Christmas period and at hotspots such as airports and festivals.

In response to questions from Councillors S Sheahan and T Eynon, the Licensing Team Leader confirmed that for vehicles aged under 6 years inspections took place annually after initial registration, which included a full mechanical and visual inspection, and for vehicles older than 6 years inspections would be every 6 months after initial registration. Furthermore, the Environmental Health Team Manager clarified that the required standards for vehicles undergoing inspection were the same for all vehicles regardless of age at the point of initial registration.

In response to several questions from Councillor M Hay, the Environmental Health Team Manager stated that he believed the proposals in the report presented a fair balance between the need to further improve standards and needs of drivers trying to make a living. He also observed that the aim of the Licensing Team was not to penalise drivers for having older vehicles, especially those that could be retrofitted to improve emission standards. He also identified the move to Euro 5 engines or equivalent engines as an example of the Licensing Team's efforts towards improving air quality.

In response to a question Councillor A C Saffell, the Licensing Team Leader confirmed that taxis received a visual inspection at the Council Offices before going forward to a depot inspection at both the point of being registered and at renewals. He explained this was a chance to inspect cleanliness and other non-mechanical issues and second chances were offered to ensure drivers kept their vehicles to an acceptable standard.

Councillor Richichi then spoke in support of the officer's proposals and observed that, in his experience as a mechanic, taxis in the District were of a high standard. He also stated that if drivers were made to upgrade to newer vehicles this would impact customers in the form of higher fares to meet additional drivers' costs.

In response to a question from Councillor Saffell, the Environmental Health Team Manager confirmed that there was currently a Tesla registered as a taxi and presented information on the vehicle in question. He also confirmed the Licensing Team were acting to encourage further use of electric vehicles by offering a 15% reduction in licensing fees, and also working with Community Focus to explore offering grants to those drivers wishing to switch to electric or lower emission vehicles.

A discussion then ensued on the need for more charging points in the District and the ways this could be achieved moving forward.

Councillor Saffell observed that the report was one of best he had read for some time and commended the officers for their efforts.

It was proposed by Councillor J Clarke, seconded by Councillor V Richichi and

RESOLVED THAT:

- A) The draft Hackney Carriage Vehicle Policy and Conditions be approved
- B) The draft Private Hire Vehicle Policy and Conditions be approved
- C) Amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy and conditions to reflect changes in legislation and central government policy is delegated to the Environmental Health Team Manager following consultation with the Portfolio Holder

Chairman's initials

13. LICENSING UPDATE REPORT

The Licensing Team Leader presented the report, highlighting work undertaken by the Licensing team over the last year in a variety of fields.

Councillor J Clarke began by thanking the Licensing Team Leader for the report, he also encouraged members to look at the Taxi and Private Hire Monthly magazine as members may find its contents very informative when taking decisions on future committees and sub-committees.

In response to a question from Councillor M Wyatt, the Licensing Team Leader agreed to have discussions with the police regarding ways of preventing drink driving and selling of illegal substances within licensed premises. He noted several staffing changes were underway within the police but would ensure these issues remained on their agenda.

Councillor T Eynon praised the quality and detail of the report and stated it was important for Councillors to be informed as to what events and enforcement action was taking place within the District.

In response to a question from Councillor Eynon, a conversation then ensued relating to rules and procedures for the Committee. In particular, the rules relating to pecuniary interests and the involvement of licensed premises owners as Members of the Licensing Committee.

Councillor Clarke concluded the conversation by assuring Councillor Eynon that the matter would be investigated further and a response provided to her in due course.

In response to several questions from Councillor N Smith, the Licensing Team Leader stated that he was involved in pushing for greater cooperation among Leicestershire Licensing Teams and information was always shared when required. He observed that membership of the national register of taxi and private hire revocations and refusals (NR3) was optional, and whilst the Council was a member, it would require legislation change to force other councils to adopt this and lobbying for this had taken place. It was also stated that although not in Leicestershire there was a great deal of cooperation with South Derbyshire District Council on cross-border reinforcement.

In response to several questions from Councillor S Sheahan, the Environmental Health team Manager and Licensing Team Leader confirmed that two of the incidents detailed on page 2 of the report were in relation to the same location. It was confirmed that these incidents were due to a number of factors and monitoring was ongoing after recent improvements.

Councillor A C Saffell spoke of his experiences with the location in question as a Castle Donington resident and expressed support for the approach taken by officers.

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.32 pm

Chairman's initials