

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 3 JUNE 2014

Councillors Present: Peter Argyle (Chairman), Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Manohar Gopal, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock (Vice-Chairman), Geoff Mayes, Andrew Rowles and Ieuan Tuck

Also Present: Sarah Clarke (Team Leader - Solicitor), Julia O'Brien (Principal Licensing Officer) and Jason Teal (Performance, Research & Consultation Manager), Eve Jones (Lead Officer Licensing)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Bryant and Councillor Quentin Webb

PART I

4. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 and 15 May 2014 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of the following amendments:

Item 2, page 5, points 1 and 3: It was noted by the Chairman that '2013/14 Municipal Year' should read '2014/15 Municipal Year'.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

6. Taxi / Private Hire Legislation Update

The Committee considered a verbal report (Agenda Item 4) concerning the Law Commission Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Draft Bill update.

Julia O'Brien verbally updated the Committee on the release of draft legislation intended to supersede current taxi and private hire legislation.

The Committee noted the draft legislation had only been published within the last fortnight and that Officers were still in the process of distilling and digesting the content. As such, a fuller appraisal of the changes proposed in the draft Bill and their implications would be circulated to Members of the Committee in due course.

It was noted that a number of recommendations had been passed into the draft Bill but that at present, no times scales had been published for the Bill's passage through Parliament but it was thought unlikely that the Bill would pass through Parliament before the next election.

Eve Jones gave a brief presentation of the key issues in the draft Bill:

- The Bill proposed to retain the taxi system as two tier.
- 'Private hire operators' would be called 'dispatchers'. It was noted that there were a lot of changes in terminology in the draft Bill.
- A national standard for private hire vehicles was proposed, meaning that vehicles would need to be maintained to an equal minimum standard across the country. However, stronger local conditions could be applied on top of these minimum standards.

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- The Bill provided for more enforcement powers for Officers. For example, the Bill proposes that Officers would be able to stop vehicles both within and without the area and that Officers would be able to issue fixed penalties.

In response to Member's questioning, Eve Jones made the following points:

- Cars registered in Reading Borough could not be hailed on the street within West Berkshire's boundaries. She confirmed that cars registered in other areas could be pre-booked to come into the area to pick up clients. Eve clarified that were a hackney carriage to be hailed on the street outside of its area and it picked up that client then the car and driver would be uninsured.
- The term 'dispatcher' meant the person in the office who took the booking – currently called the 'operator'.
- Holding a UK driving licence was a condition on holding a taxi license in West Berkshire, therefore a non-UK driving licence holder could not apply for a taxi licence.

RESOLVED that:

A further, fuller update would be circulated to the Committee via email.

7. Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 5) concerning the Animal Boarding Establishments act 1963.

Julia O'Brien introduced the report to the Committee outlining an amendment to the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 to extend to the animal boarding license to include the boarding of animals as a business in private dwellings, commonly called 'home boarding'.

It was noted that this had become an increasingly popular option for dog owners in recent years.

Julia O'Brien outlined that the Council would be inviting applications for licences from known home boarders, noting that these would be issued within conditions appropriate to the premises and the surroundings in which the animals were kept.

Julia confirmed that the annual fee would be £170 per year.

In response to questioning from Councillor Adrian Edwards, Julia O'Brien confirmed that people licensed as home boarders were required to have insurance and that Officers would take enforcement action against known home boarders who refused to register for a license.

As a point of clarity, Julia O'Brien confirmed that this amendment to the legislation applied to those whose business was to keep and look after a dog in their home environment and that the legislation would be interpreted in an appropriate manner.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 6.55 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature