

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 10 JULY 2023

Councillors Present: Phil Barnett (Chairman), Billy Drummond, Nigel Foot, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Ann Collins (Trainee Regulatory Services Officer), Moira Fraser (Principal Officer - Policy & Governance), Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager), Vikki Rigden (Lead Applications Officer), Benjamin Ryan (Clerk), Beth Varcoe (Principal Lawyer-Regulatory & Litigation) and Amanda Ward (Licensing Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Dick

Councillor(s) Absent: Councillor Nick Carter and Councillor Stephanie Steevenson

PART I

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 23 January and 25 May 2023 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Committee declared an interest in all Agenda Items, as they would use the services discussed within the applications and reported that, as their interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

Councillor Louise Sturgess declared an interest in all Agenda Items, as her partner held a personal license and reported that, as her interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, she determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

5. Statement of Licensing Policy - Review and Consultation

[Item began 8 minutes and 20 seconds into the recording.](#)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4) concerning the Statement of Licensing Policy Review and Consultation. Ms Moira Fraser introduced the report.

Councillor Sturgess enquired whether we could encourage responses from consultees even if it was a null response and Ms Fraser stated that you could not force a response, however they could encourage it within the email even if it's a non-response.

Councillor Martha Vickers proposed the recommendations within the report, which was seconded by Councillor Billy Drummond. The proposal was put to a vote and was carried.

RESOLVED that there will be consultation on the draft Licensing Policy as produced at Appendix A to the report.

6. West Berkshire Council Licensing Annual Report 2022/23

[Item began 15 minutes and 22 seconds into the recording.](#)

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The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 5) concerning the West Berkshire Council Licensing Annual Report and Consultation. Ms Fraser and Mr Sean Murphy introduced the report.

Councillor Vickers questioned whether the reduction in taxi drivers was due to the decrease in either supply of drivers or the demand of taxis. Mr Murphy explained that he was not sure, however this was a national trend, that there was no issue with the lack of taxis and that some drivers during COVID-19 did go into other, more sustainable, forms of employment.

The Chairman queried whether there were issues with wait times for taxis and Mr Murphy replied that West Berkshire Council (The Council) could conduct a survey on the matter.

Councillor Jane Langford enquired whether the loss of experienced staff impacted the speed of processing license applications and Ms Vikki Rigden answered that most applications were still processed within the set time frame.

Councillor Drummond asked what the staff turnover was like for the Licensing team and Mr Murphy explained that it was not a problem, however hiring enforcement officers was problematic and it was difficult to find those with the correct qualifications.

Councillor Vickers believed that the anti-idling measures should remain in place and Mr Murphy confirmed that there were still initiatives in place with an emphasis on wider public engagement.

Councillor Clive Taylor wanted clarification on the increasing numbers of licenses and Ms Rigden explained that personal licenses were life-long hence the increasing number as this was a cumulative total.

Councillor Vickers asked what a dermal license included, and Ms Amanda Ward explained that this included those who wanted to carry out, electrolysis, tattoos, and acupuncture, as examples.

The report was to note only so the Committee **RESOLVED** to note the report.

7. **Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2023 - Update**

[Item 6 began 38 minutes into the recording.](#)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 5) concerning the Hackney Carriage Tariff 2023 Update. Ms Fraser introduced the report.

Councillor Vickers enquired whether taxis could turn down a disabled individual and Mr Murphy stated that it was a crime to do so if the taxi had the capacity to do so, as well as that newer taxis had to be able to take a wheelchair. Taxi drivers were also required to undertake training on the carriage of disabled passengers.

Councillor Vickers questioned whether any mystery shopping had been undertaken and Mr Murphy explained that this had not been done yet, but he would get back to the Committee with the results once this was done.

The Chairman raised the point that there were varying sizes of wheelchairs and all of them should be accommodated for.

Councillor Vickers asked whether the Licensing Team had considered raising the fouling charge. Mr Murphy expressed that the Licensing team were looking at a fee system that scaled with the fare banding. Ms Fraser added that not only did fares higher during tariff 2 and 3 times but it was also more difficult to get the vehicles cleaned later at night and during the holiday periods covered by these tariffs.

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Councillor Vickers asked for clarification on one of the objector comments in regard to electric vehicles (EVs) and Mr Murphy explained that he was unsure what the comments were about but mentioned that the Councils was looking to encourage the use of EVs.

Councillor Nigel Foot asked how the waived fees for EVs would work financially. Ms Fraser explained that the fee was subsidised by West Berkshire Council. The proposal was to keep the subsidy in place for three years but it would be subjected to an annual review.

The Committee noted the report.

8. Update on the National Register of Taxi Licence Revocation, Refusals and Suspensions

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning the Update on the National Register of Taxi Licence Revocation, Refusals and Suspensions. Ms Moira Fraser introduced the report which set out the procedure that would be adopted for placing names on the register and for dealing with requests for information placed on the register

The Committee noted the report.

9. Forward Plan

Ms Fraser explained that a report from the community alcohol partnership would be heading to the November meeting.

Councillor Vickers asked what the Community Alcohol Partnership was and Ms Fraser explained that it was a scheme where the Council worked with Thames Valley Police and that she would send some literature on the partnership to members.
Councillor Owen Jefferey joined the meeting.

The Chairman asked whether the Committee still preferred to meet at 16:30 and this was still seen as the best starting time.

(The meeting commenced at 4.35 pm and closed at 5.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature