

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 8 JULY 2024

Councillors Present: Jeremy Cottam (Chairman), Paul Dick (Vice-Chairman), Phil Barnett, Billy Drummond, Jane Langford, David Marsh, Justin Pemberton, Stephanie Steevenson, Clive Taylor and Martha Vickers

Also Present: Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), Joe Mannix (Licensing Officer), and Moira Fraser (Principal Officer - Policy & Governance)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillors Nigel Foot and Paul Kander

PART I

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2024 and 9 May 2024 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jane Langford declared an interest in Agenda Item 6 by virtue of the fact that she used taxis on a regular basis, but 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. West Berkshire Council Licensing Annual Report 2023/24

The Committee considered the West Berkshire Council Licensing Annual Report (Agenda Item 4), which was introduced by Moira Fraser.

Members asked how the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) would discharge its additional duties, particularly those relating to single use plastics and reducing violence against women and girls.

Officers confirmed that in relation to single use plastics, the initial focus was on raising awareness amongst local businesses. Any issues were being picked up as part of routine visits (e.g., hygiene inspections, trading standards or licensing). Compliance had been found to be very high.

Officers regularly met with Thames Valley Police to discuss reducing violence against women and girls. Businesses operating within the night-time economy were encouraged to adopt the 'Ask for Angela' initiative and this was being integrated into the PPP's inspections pro-forma. Businesses with younger customers (especially the larger chains), were found to be more likely to be aware of the scheme and to promote it to their customers.

The Committee acknowledged that the PPP had been stretched in recent months and commended the officers who had worked very hard and had 'gone the extra mile' to deliver services. Members welcomed the news that the service was now up to full strength.

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Members also asked for further detail about the apprentices. It was confirmed that three out of four apprentices in the first cohort had successfully completed their training, and the fourth had just sat their exams. Two officers were undertaking Level 6 apprenticeship in Trading Standards and another officer was starting their second year of their Environmental Health Level 6 qualification. The service would take on a new cohort of apprentices in due course.

Members praised the format of the annual report as being easy to read and understand, but asked if trend data could be included within the statistics to highlight areas of concern. It was confirmed that the overall picture in West Berkshire was positive.

Members asked for more detail in relation to complaints. Officers did not have information available in relation to recent complaints, but undertook to provide this within future reports.

Action: Information on complaints to be included in future annual reports.

The Committee welcomed progress made in supporting the taxi trade to switch to greener vehicles.

Members asked about licences granted for people training animals for exhibition. Officers did not have details about recent licences, but explained that these covered petting farms, falconry centres, and even animals appearing in television programmes. Licences had associated inspection regimes.

Action: Sean Murphy to provide Members with details of the current licences for people training animals for exhibition.

The Committee noted the increase in dermal personal and premises registrations and asked about the associated inspection regime. It was explained that there were standard inspections covering aspects such as handwashing facilities, sanitation/cleaning of equipment and use of non-porous surfaces in order to minimise spread of disease.

Members asked about knowledge of/compliance with the new regulations related to single use plastics and whether the regulations were particularly complex. Those working with the Plastic Free Community in Thatcham had found that some businesses were not aware of the new regulations.

Officers acknowledged that there was always more that could be done around communications and awareness raising. However, the PPP had written to businesses to advise them of the requirements of the new regulations, and this was being picked up as part of routine inspections. Officers were not aware of any lack of compliance, but welcomed intelligence that could inform inspections. It was suggested that this may be more of an issue for fairs and mobile catering.

RESOLVED to approve the West Berkshire Council Licensing Annual Report 2023/24.

6. **Draft Statement of Gambling Principles 2025-2028**

The Committee considered the Draft Statement of Gambling Principles 2025-2028 (Agenda Item 5), which was introduced by Moira Fraser.

It was suggested that further clarification should be provided in relation to the different categories of gambling machines.

Members welcomed schools being consulted and suggested that engagement should also take place via local youth centres (e.g., Waterside Centre). Feedback from previous consultations had suggested that the wording should be amended when consulting young people.

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RESOLVED:

- That the draft revised Statement of Gambling Principles prepared under Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 as appended to the report be approved for consultation.
- That the Service Lead: Public Protection be authorised to proceed with formal consultation for an 8 week period between the 18 July 2024 and the 12 September 2024 and that the parties as set out in paragraph 5.9 of the report be consulted.
- That any comments on the revised Draft Statement be brought to the Licensing Committee meeting on 4 November 2024 for discussion prior to the report being formally presented for adoption at the 28 November 2024 Council meeting.

7. Update on Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2024

The Committee considered the Update on Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2024 (Agenda Item 6), which was introduced by Moira Fraser.

Members had no comments or queries in relation to this report.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. Forward Plan

The Committee reviewed the Forward Plan (Agenda Item 7).

It was suggested that if future applications had supporting photos, maps and plans (similar to the approach used at Area Planning Committees), this might reduce the need for Members to make site visits.

Action: Officers to include photos, maps and plans with future applications.

It was suggested that Licensing Sub-Committee Members could be asked at the outset if they would like a site visit to be arranged.

(The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm and closed at 5.10 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature