

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **General Purposes Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark NG24 1BY on Thursday, 10 March 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs R Crowe (Chairman)
Councillor R White (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor L Brazier, Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor M Cope,
Councillor P Harris, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor Mrs S Michael,
Councillor Mrs S Saddington, Councillor T Thompson, Councillor
I Walker, Councillor T Wildgust and Councillor Mrs Y Woodhead

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Goff

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor S Carlton (Committee Member) and Councillor K Walker (Committee Member)

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

NOTED that no Member or Officer declared any interest pursuant to any statutory requirement in any matter discussed or voted upon at the meeting.

25 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

The Chairman advised that the proceedings were being recorded by the Council and that the meeting was being livestreamed and broadcast from the Civic Suite, Castle House.

26 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2022

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2021 were a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27 GENERAL PURPOSES FORWARD PLAN (APRIL 2022 TO MARCH 2023)

AGREED that the following items be added to the General Purposes Forward Plan:

- Street Pavement Licences Update
- Review of Taxi Fares
- Attendance at Committee by a Representative of the Gambling Commission
- Livery for Hackney Carriages

28 REVIEW OF THE VEHICLE AGE POLICY FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which set out proposed changes to the Council's Vehicle Age Policy in respect of licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles.

The current policy was set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report which had been agreed in 2015 with it being noted that a number of representations expressing concern had been received from the taxi trade i.e. shrinkage of the taxi fleet due to the pandemic; increase in cost of second hand vehicles leading to affordability issues of replacing vehicles when they remained in good condition but had passed the Policy's age limit; and the disparity between the Council's Policy and that of the County Council.

In considering the report Members agreed that the Policy appeared not to take account of the durability of modern vehicles and that it should be amended accordingly. Members agreed that the proposed amendments as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report be further amended to increase the age of the vehicles.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Council's age policy for Hackney Carriage and Private hire Vehicles be amended as follows:

- (a) all vehicles must be under 9 years of age on first registration and not over 15 years of age on renewal;
- (b) vehicles over 6 years of age that fail the licensing vehicle test on structural damage or a major mechanical issue will not be licensed; and
- (c) a purpose built or wheelchair accessible vehicle must be under 9 years of age when first licensed and not over 15 years of age on renewal.

29 REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE TEST FOR LICENSED DRIVERS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought Members' approval to implement changes to the Knowledge Test for licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers.

The report set out the requirements that an applicant must meet in order for them to be considered as a 'fit and proper' person to be granted a licence, one of which was a knowledge test consisting of 7 different parts, including routes and locations. It was reported that due to the increase in mobile route finders and built in navigation aids, the routes and locations sections were under review.

In considering the report Members agreed that the application process was important to ensure that all applicants were suitable to hold a licence but that the process did not put barriers in place to limit the ability of applications to obtain a licence.

AGREED (unanimously) that the taxi knowledge test be amended to remove the sections relating to routes and locations.

30 TAX CONDITIONALITY CHECKS FOR VARIOUS LICENCE APPLICATIONS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought Members' approval to implement changes to the licence application processes in line with the requirements of Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs.

It was reported that from 4 April 2022, licensing authorities must carry out certain checks on applications from individuals, companies and any type of partnership to make sure they were aware of their tax responsibilities or had completed a tax check. The applications affected were for the following licences: Hackney Carriage Drivers; Private Hire Drivers; Private Hire Vehicle Operators; Scrap Metal Sites; and Scrap Metal Collector. It was proposed that the Council would continue to publicise the tax check requirements and, where possible, to advise applicants of the changes prior to an application being submitted. Changes would also be made to the application form to include a declaration that the applicant was aware of their tax responsibilities.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

(a) the changes to the application process for some licences be noted;

(b) the addition of a declaration, as follows, be approved:

“I confirm that I am aware of the content of HMRC guidance relating to my (our) tax registration obligations”; and

(c) the above declaration be added to the following licence application forms:

Hackney Carriage Drivers;
Private Hire Drivers;
Private Hire Vehicle Operators;
Scrap Metal Sites; and
Scrap Metal Collector

31 SATISFACTION SURVEYS FOR TAXI USERS AND THE TAXI TRADE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to update Members on the completion of the satisfaction surveys that were carried out from customers using taxis within the district and from the taxi trade. It was reported that the purpose of the surveys was to gain an insight into the way which taxis operate and how and why members of the public use their services, the results of which would assist the development of the licensing services in terms of shaping future provision and policies. A full copy of the questions and responses were appended to the report.

In considering the report Members commented on whether additional signage was required at the taxi ranks within Newark to prevent the public parking in them. In response, the Business Manager advised that the County Council had changed the timings of the ranks and additional signage advising of the times had been erected. He also advised that enforcement was contracted out by the County Council.

A Member suggested that the current taxi rank at Kirk Gate be re-designated as a short stay drop-off/pick-up area and it was agreed that this would be further reviewed.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report be noted; and
- (b) further consideration be given to:
 - (i) the possible re-designation of the Kirk Gate rank
 - (ii) what additional enforcement measures could be taken in relation to the existing taxi ranks within the district; and
 - (iii) possible livery for hackney carriage taxis.

32 UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection into the activity and performance of the Licensing Team which included details of current ongoing enforcement issues.

Information contained within the report related to the number of applications for grants and renewals of licences for Hackney Carriage; Private Hire; and Ambulance Drivers together with those for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles. A note of ongoing enforcement activity was also listed with information as to what action had been taken to-date.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

33 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That, under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1, of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

34 MINUTES OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE/PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S SUB-COMMITTEE (21.12.21)

AGREED (unanimously) that the exempt Minutes of the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Driver's Sub-Committee held on 21 December 2021 be noted.

35 MINUTES OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE/PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS SUB-COMMITTEE (03.02.22)

AGREED (unanimously) that the exempt Minutes of the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Driver's Sub-Committee held on 3 February 2022 be noted.

Meeting closed at 7.23 pm.

Chairman