

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **General Purposes Committee** held in Castle House, Great North Road, Newark NG24 1BY on Thursday, 23 June 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT Councillor Mrs R Crowe (Chairman)
 Councillor I Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor L Brazier, Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor S Carlton,
Councillor M Cope, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor Mrs S Michael,
Councillor S Saddington, Councillor T Thompson, Councillor K Walker,
Councillor R White, Councillor T Wildgust and Councillor
Mrs Y Woodhead

APOLOGIES FOR Councillor P Harris (Committee Member)
ABSENCE:

1 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.

2 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

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.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2022

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held 10 March 2022 were a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 GENERAL PURPOSES FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, noting the Review of Taxi Fares scheduled to come before Committee on 15 September 2022.

The Chairman advised that Officers had been contacted numerous times by taxi drivers, requesting that the issue of fares be looked at as a matter of urgency, given the rapidly increasing cost of fuel and cost of living. The Chairman sought Committee's approval for delegated authority to authorise such changes, if found to be necessary.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Forward Plan be noted; and

- (b) the Review of Taxi Fares begin with immediate effect, with the Chairman of the Committee being given delegated authority, following appropriate consultation, to make any changes to the fare structure as necessary.

5 REVIEW OF AMBULANCE VEHICLE AGE POLICY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Licensing Officer which recommended that the age policy for Private Hire Ambulance Vehicles be amended in line with the vehicle age policy for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.

The report set out the specification that a vehicle must meet in order to be considered for licensing with one of the criteria being its age. The policy sought to strike a balance between the replacement of a vehicle and having a modern taxi fleet within the district. A note of the existing policy, agreed in 2016, was provided together with the newly adopted age policy for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.

Following representations received by two Private Hire Ambulance operators, Members were asked to consider whether the amendment should also be extended to ambulances.

In considering the report, Members agreed that the condition of the vehicle should be the deciding factor and not its age, noting that if it had passed its MOT and was up to the standard required for use as a Private Hire Ambulance the vehicle should be licensed.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Vehicle Age Policy in relation to Private Hire Ambulance 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 major mechanical issue will not be licensed; and
- (c) a purpose built wheelchair accessible vehicle must be under 9 years of age when first licensed and not over 15 years of age on renewal.

6 KIRKGATE TAXI RANK

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Licensing Officer which sought to provide Members with information on whether to amend or remove the taxi rank on Kirkgate, Newark.

The report set out the number of ranks in operation within the town centre and provided statistical information taken from the recent survey of taxi users and trade as to what ranks they used the most. It was noted that the results for the Kirkgate rank were skewed due to its use as a taxi rank being suspended during the pandemic through to the present day.

Members considered the report, noting that the rank provided a useful space for market shoppers, allowing them to park for 30 minutes. They added that its permanent removal as a taxi rank would allow this to continue and would assist with returning footfall to the town which was much needed following the drop in trade due to the pandemic.

It was noted that should Committee recommend the removal of the site as a taxi rank, a period of consultation would be required. In response to how long this may take, the Assistant Director - Legal & Democratic Services advised that a note would be circulated to Members of the Committee with the information.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the taxi rank on Kirkgate, Newark be removed;
- (b) a consultation exercise be undertaken to seek views on the proposed removal; and
- (c) a report setting out the results of the consultation be reported back to Committee prior to any final decision.

7 REVIEW OF PSPO ALCOHOL CONTROLS IN NEWARK

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Licensing Officer which sought a review of controls for drinking in public places in Newark.

The report set out the background to the making of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and the powers of any authorised officer to enforce that. Details of the review and consultation were reported together with the number of incidents which had occurred since it was approved in June 2019.

In considering the report Members queried whether any incidents had progressed through to prosecution. Officers advised that they were not aware of any.

In relation to whether there were any repeat offenders, Officers advised that there were some who were known to the Community Protection Officers who worked with them in the community.

It was noted that this would be the final time which the PSPOs could be extended and that in three years' time, they would need to be formally renewed.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the renewal of the Public Space Protection Order for drinking alcohol in public spaces be confirmed for a further three years;
- (b) the terms of the PSPO to be as follows:

- (i) An authorised Officer of the Council or Police may ask a person who is consuming or appears to be consuming alcohol in an area covered by the PSPO and that person is causing or is likely to cause anti-social behaviour to cease drinking the alcohol and dispose of the alcohol, or surrender the alcohol to the Officer, or immediately leave the area covered by the PSPO; and
- (ii) the fixed penalty level for all Public Space Protection Orders be set at £100.00 reduced to £75.00 if payment is made within 14 days.

8 UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Licensing Officer 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.

Meeting closed at 6.29 pm.

Chairman