

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **General Purposes Committee** held in the Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts. NG24 1BY on Thursday, 15 November 2018 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor Mrs K Arnold, Councillor Mrs I Brown, Councillor D Clarke,
Councillor M Cope, Councillor Mrs S Michael, Councillor D Payne,
Councillor Mrs S Saddington, Councillor Mrs L Tift, Councillor B Wells
and Councillor Mrs Y Woodhead

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor P Duncan and Councillor Mrs S Soar

18 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.

19 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

NOTED: that an audio recording was to be made of the meeting by the Council.

20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minute No. 15 – Proposed Amendment to Castlegate Taxi Rank

The Business Manager – Environmental Health & Licensing advised the Committee that he had spoken to the relevant Officer at Nottinghamshire County Council to remind them that the matter remained outstanding.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT TASK & FINISH GROUP - TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Environmental Health & Licensing in relation to the recommendations of the Task & finish Group on taxi and private vehicle licensing.

The report set out the background to the establishment of the Department for Transport's Task & Finish Group and the objectives thereof. Paragraph 4.0 of the report set out the recommendations of the Group with those of most relevance being specifically reported. In considering the report Members made a number of specific comments.

A Member expressed some concern in relation to the Recommendation No. 21, stating that an isolated offence in someone's past could prevent the person they were now from getting on with their life. He also added that Recommendation No. 17 may lead to issues with data protection laws. However, on the whole he supported the recommendations and the proposal to lobby the district's MPs requesting them to support and promote the Task & Finish Group's recommendations within Parliament.

In response to when the recommendations may become operational, the Business Manager advised that this was not known.

Members all agreed that Recommendation No. 11 was particularly welcomed and would help to eradicate the ongoing problems with taxi operators employing drivers from outside the area.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the recommendations of the Department of Transport Task & Finish Group be endorsed;
- (b) the local MPS be written to seeking their support for the recommendations contained within the Task & Finish Group's report;
- (c) the local MPs promote the aforementioned report and its recommendations within Parliament.

22 NATIONAL DATABASE OF REFUSED AND REVOKED LICENCES

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Environmental Health & Licensing in relation to the creation of a national database for the recording of refused and revoked Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Drivers. The report also sought Members' approval for Officers to upload driver details to the database.

The report set out the background to the proposed creation of the database highlighting that many licensing authorities were concerned with the lack of ability to obtain reliable information with regard to the past licensing history of applicants for a HC or PH Drivers' Licence. The proposals for the databases creation were listed at paragraph 3.0.

In considering the report Members expressed their support for the creation of the database. A Member noted that it was proposed that all new drivers be checked against the database but queried whether there were any proposals to check the records of existing drivers. The Licensing Officer advised that DBS checks were carried out annually and that a check on the national database could be carried out at the same time.

AGREED (unanimously) that the new register of refusals and revocations be noted and that:

- (a) data be uploaded onto the database in line with data protection rules be approved;
- (b) all new drivers be checked against the national database; and
- (c) the application forms be amended to inform drivers that their details will be entered on the register if their licence is refused or revoked in the future.

23 REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY - CONSULTEES RESPONSE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Environmental Health & Licensing in relation to the feedback received from the consultation carried out into the review of the Statement of Gambling Policy. The report also sought Members' approval to recommend to full Council the adoption of the Policy.

The report set out the requirements on the Licensing Authority to review the Policy at least every 3 years and provided specific information as to the Council's current stance in relation to Casinos.

In considering the report Members noted that only 10% of under-18s were challenged in public houses when using gaming machines. They further noted that several MPs had expressed concern about fixed odd betting machines and the problems they caused. The Business Manager advised that there were such machines in betting shops and that they were very high stake value with the user spending approximately £20 every 20 seconds.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the consultee responses be noted; and
- (b) the draft Statement of Gambling Policy be supported and forwarded to Full Council with a recommendation for approval.

24 UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Licensing Officer in relation to the activity and performance of the Licensing Team with details of the current ongoing enforcement issues.

The report covered the period 1 July to 30 September 2018 inclusive and set out the range and number of licence applications during that period. It also highlighted any activity required as a result of the applications.

Information contained in 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 vehicles. Information was also provided in relation to both street and house to house collections. Enforcement activity was also listed with information as to what action had been taken to-date for the aforementioned period.

A Member expressed concern about the enforcement issue in relation to the alleged taxi firm operating in Newark without a licence and advertising their services on Facebook, noting that if it was accurate the matter was a criminal offence. Members were advised that the Licensing Enforcement Officer had spoken with the individual and advised him of his obligations. However, there had been no evidence that such activity had taken place.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

25 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 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

26 MINUTES OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS/VEHICLE SUB-COMMITTEE

27 AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Drivers' Sub-Committee held on 21 September 2018 be noted.

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Meeting closed at 7.19 pm.

Chairman