

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **General Purposes Committee** held in the Broadcast from Castle House, Great North Road, Newark NG24 1BY on Thursday, 3 September 2020 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor Mrs K Arnold, Councillor L Brazier, Councillor Mrs B Brooks,
Councillor R Jackson, Councillor Mrs S Michael, Councillor
Mrs S Saddington, Councillor I Walker and Councillor K Walker

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Mrs I Brown (Committee Member), Councillor S Carlton
(Committee Member), Councillor M Cope (Committee Member),
Councillor P Harris (Committee Member) and Councillor
Mrs Y Woodhead (Committee Member)

REMOTE MEETING LEGISLATION

The meeting was held remotely, in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police & Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police & Crime Panel Meetings) (England & Wales) Regulations 2020.

20 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.

21 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.

22 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2019

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held 5 September 2019 were a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23 ORDER OF BUSINESS

With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman changed the order of business. Agenda Item 8 was taken after Item 4. The agenda resumed its stated order thereafter.

24 REFORMS TO ANNUAL CANVASS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Electoral Services Manager which sought to advise Members of the reforms being implemented for the Annual Canvass process for 2020 and beyond.

The report advised that the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) was required to match the names and addresses of registered electors against data held by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). This enabled the ERO to compare electoral data against that held by other departments of the District Council. In addition to the above the reforms also enable some communications to be sent via email. These would ask the recipient to carefully follow instructions as to how to complete the registration process. The report advised that at present it was unclear as to whether a personal canvass of non-responding properties would be carried out due to the current restrictions due to Covid-19.

AGREED (unanimously) that the changes to the Annual Canvass process as from 2020 be noted.

25 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT - TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE STATISTICS 2019

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to advise Members of the latest vehicle figures relating to taxi and private hire vehicles collected and collated by the Department for Transport (DfT).

The report provided Members with information at a national (England) and local level in relation to licensed vehicles, drivers, operators, fit and proper policies and passenger satisfaction. Paragraph 3.1 noted that Newark & Sherwood continued to develop its policies and procedures to ensure compliance with national regulations and that it compared well with the national picture. It was reported that there was very little local information available on customer satisfaction and that it was proposed to undertake a survey of taxi and private hire users across the district to gather data on the satisfaction with reliability, vehicle availability, wheelchair accessible vehicle availability and passenger satisfaction with cost.

In considering the report Members raised their concerns with the ongoing issues of drivers who were not licensed by Newark & Sherwood District Council, with specific mention of those drivers from Wolverhampton, querying whether any enforcement action could be taken against them. Both the Chairman and Business Manager advised that the issue had been raised with the district's MPs but that no resolution had been reached. It was noted that there was a Nottinghamshire standard which all authorities within the county had adopted.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the details of the Department of Transport survey on taxis and private hire vehicles be noted;
- (b) a customer satisfaction survey of users be undertaken in 2020; and
- (c) a draft of the customer survey be brought back to the November meeting prior to being issued to allow for Member input.

26 SAFEGUARDING ISSUES AND TAXI DRIVERS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Licensing Officer which sought approval from Members for a revised approach to ensuring the safeguarding training provided to taxi drivers, with particular reference to refresher training.

The report set out the background to the current approach adopted by the Council following the publication of the Jay Report into Child Exploitation in Rotherham and the actions taken to-date. Paragraph 4 of the report set out the proposals in order to keep drivers informed of changes in safeguarding, the latest best practice and where to report concerns by way of a refresher safeguarding training course for drivers to attend every three years.

In considering the report and proposals, Members queried whether drivers from other local authorities were required to undertake the training. The Chairman advised that this was not known but that she took every opportunity to advise local residents to ensure they used drivers licensed by NSDC. The Business Manager added that information would be circulated on social media around Christmas giving the same advice and that in order to be licensed the driver would have undergone a stringent testing process. It was suggested that Members also pass on this advice to their parish councils.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire and Ambulance Driver Licence conditions, be amended to include the requirement for all drivers to attend a renewal safeguarding training course every three years; and
- (b) a driver's licence will not be renewed if they fail to attend the relevant course within a three year period since their last attendance.

27 NATIONAL STATUTORY STANDARDS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE PASSENGERS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to update Members on the new statutory guidance relating to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle passengers and the implications for Newark & Sherwood District Council (NSDC).

The report set out that the new standards were designed to reduce the risk of harm to passengers and to help improve consistency across local authorities and that it was expected that local authorities would fully implement the measures as soon as possible. In comparing the new standards with those already adopted by NSDC, Officers found that many were already in place. However, there would be some amendments necessary to the policy to ensure that it reflected the statutory guidance. One such amendment would be the matter of the assessment of previous convictions. The new guidance listed a set of principles that were not currently aligned with NSDC's policy.

In considering the report and proposals, Members queried whether it would be necessary to undertake a consultation with licensed drivers. The Business Manager advised that the proposed changes to the current policy would be reported to Committee in November for approval, following which they would be sent out to drivers for comment. It was hoped that the new standards would be in operation by early 2021.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the publication of new statutory guidance relating to taxis and private hire vehicles be noted; and
- (b) a review of the current NSDC taxi policy be undertaken and a report outlining changes be presented to the next General Purposes Committee.

28 UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

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

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 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. Also provided within the report was information relating to both street and house to house collections.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

29 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 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

30 MINUTES OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS SUB-COMMITTEES

30a Minutes of Sub-Committee held on 30 October 2019

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Driver's Sub-Committee held on 30 October 2019 be noted.

30b Minutes of Sub-Committee held on 16 January 2020

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Driver's Sub-Committee held on 16 January 2020 be noted.

30c Minutes of Sub-Committee held on 3 March 2020

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Driver's Sub-Committee held on 3 March 2020 be noted.

31 FORWARD PLAN

AGREED that the following items be added to the Committees Forward Plan for consideration at the next meeting scheduled for 12 November 2020.

- Update Report on Safeguarding Issues and Taxi Drivers
- Update Report on National Statutory Standards for Hackney Carriages & Private Hire Vehicle Passengers

Meeting closed at 6.30 pm.

Chairman