

## LICENSING COMMITTEE

17 July 2019

Present: Councillor A Dychton (Vice Chair)  
Councillors S Bolton, I Hamid, K Hastrick, P Jeffree, A Khan,  
B Mauthoor, M Mills, J Pattinson, G Saffery and R Wenham

Also present: Councillor K Collett (Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Head of Community Protection  
Environmental Health Manager (Business)  
Business Compliance Officer  
Democratic Services Officer (AG)

### 1 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Fahmy, Grimston, Smith and Walford.

As Councillor Fahmy had given apologies, Councillor Dychton chaired the meeting.

### 2 **Disclosure of interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11 March 2019 were submitted and signed.

### 4 **Vehicle Licensing Policy 2019-2024**

The Business Compliance Officer introduced the report. He outlined the background leading to the development of the revised vehicle licensing policy for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles. He advised that members were asked to consider the interim report and options contained within which would be put forward for formal consultation.

He discussed the consultation that had already been conducted between November 2018 and March 2019, including the provision of a questionnaire

that asked the public and trade representatives for responses on a wide range of transport, taxi and private hire specific questions. There had been 76 responses; 32 from the public and 44 from those within the trade - these had been carefully studied and a number of proposals had been included in the draft policy as a result.

The Business Compliance Officer explained that two drop in consultation sessions had been held at the Watford Town Hall on 3 and 4 July 2019 and had been attended by 44 people. During these sessions, surveys were provided (with 13 responses received to date). Over the two days, attendees were presented with details of the proposed policy changes, information on current licence conditions for comparison purposes and background information on the development of the trade and transport in general.

The revised policy was intended to reflect developments in vehicle licensing matters and would be current for the next five years.

In response to questions from members, the Business Compliance Officer:

- Advised that the draft proposals and questionnaire had been available on the council's website and had been publicised through the council's social media. It was intended that officers would carry out additional visits to cab ranks and speak direct to the trade and provide further surveys. There was also an effective text messaging system to drivers. Furthermore, the drivers association had a web page and would assist to promulgate information.
- Clarified that there had been some misunderstanding as to whether the carrying of first aid kits was mandatory or compulsory - and that the equipment was to enable drivers to provide first aid to themselves where necessary. He advised that as businesses, the drivers had a responsibility under health and safety regulations to provide suitable first aid equipment; the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was the enforcement authority. The HSE was also the authority that could require the carrying of an associated reporting book.
- Explained that further study would be carried out on whether a tyre tread condition should be included in the policy.
- Advised that vehicles which had assistive technology features could be utilised but only to the extent of providing assistance to driving and not driving themselves.
- Informed the committee that some drivers were in favour of using card machines for the payment of fares and some were not. Whilst there was some concern as to the associated charges the overall benefit seemed to be in favour of the drivers.

- Agreed that the next consultation period (commencing on 25 July 2019) should be extended to conclude on 1 October 2019. The Environmental Health Manager (Business) advised that the council had up to date details of drivers and reminders had been sent out during the initial consultation phase.
- Advised that all drivers must agree to take a guide dog used by a passenger on board unless a medical exemption had been issued.
- Explained that drivers did not have to carry booster seats in vehicles.
- Advised that drivers could decide where to take their vehicle for repairs; and if the body of a vehicle had been damaged the council could ask for an engineer's report.

Members discussed the proposals about the maximum age a vehicle should be at the first time of licensing. A range of views were expressed; including emphasising that any additional costs to drivers needed to be really necessary and stressing the importance of not being lenient in relation to the age of vehicles owing to the impact of emissions on the environment. The Business Compliance Officer explained how the vehicle age had been determined and the relationship to emission regulations. He advised that the matter would be further reviewed taking account of member's comments.

The Head of Community Protection added that a detailed report would be provided to the committee in October following the further consultation to ensure the balance was right. The council was seeking to support businesses whilst also considering its wider responsibilities.

In response to further questions from members, the Business Compliance Officer:

- Advised that the proposal that luminous jackets should be carried in vehicles was suggested by the trade. The cost of the items would seem low as compared to the safety benefits provided should a vehicle break down. The contrary argument against carriage was that well maintained, modern vehicles rarely broke down.
- Informed the committee that some councils in England mandated the use of CCTV in vehicles whilst other authorities simply provided a criteria for installation. Only a few authorities declined the installation of the equipment. The Watford Borough Council approach was that installation was the driver's choice. He went on to discuss issues around cost and data protection.
- Provided examples to the committee on the possible livery of vehicles.

- Advised that there was no maximum age limit for drivers to be granted licenses. The Environmental Health Manager (Business) explained that from the age of 55, drivers undertook a medical examination at 5 yearly intervals, and from the age of 70 this interval was reduced to every year.
- Explained that there was a reduced vehicle licensing fee when an electrically powered vehicle was being utilised. The Head of Community Protection added that a further incentive to using an electric vehicle was that some companies only contracted people who operated these vehicles (thereby almost guaranteeing the driver business); and the council wanted to give drivers these opportunities.
- Advised that the council did not audit operators on information they held; rather the operators would provide information if required to the council for a specific investigation or to satisfy a licence condition. Operators had a duty to store information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. However, there was a five year check on systems adopted by operators – such as how driver bookings were taken and dispatched.

Following discussions on the recommendation contained in the report, the committee:

RESOLVED –

- that members approve officers to go to final consultation with the draft policy proposals between 25 July 2019 and 1 October 2019.

Chair  
Licensing Committee

The meeting started at 7.00 p.m.  
and finished at 8.20 p.m.