

LICENSING COMMITTEE

8 March 2021

Present: Councillor G Saffery (Chair)
Councillor A Dychton (Vice-Chair)
Councillors S Bolton, A Grimston, K Hastrick, M Hofman, A Khan,
R Martins, B Mauthoor, M Mills, J Pattinson, R Smith,
I Stotesbury and R Wenham

Officers: Licensing Manager
Senior Licensing Officer (AY)
Business Compliance Officer
Senior Solicitor
Democratic Services Officer (JK)

18 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Hamid.

19 **Disclosure of interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

20 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 January 2021 were agreed. They would be signed once members and officers returned to the Town Hall.

21 **Licensing Sub-Committee minutes and update**

The committee received an update on the Licensing Sub-Committee hearings which had taken place since March 2020.

The minutes of the meetings held on the following dates were agreed:

- 9 June 2020 (132 Ridge Lane)
- 13 January 2021 (Greek Pitta)
- 8 February 2021 (Twisted Monkey)
- 10 February 2021 (Basement)
- 11 February 2021 (Abaco's Bar)
- 18 February 2021 (Batista's)

Review of Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy

The committee received the report of the Senior Licensing Officer detailing the results of the consultation on the policy and any amendments that needed to be made to the draft Statement of Licensing Policy and cumulative impact assessment as a result.

The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report. The report focused on the review of the council's Statement of Licensing Policy and the town centre cumulative impact policy. The proposal was to retain this policy in the area. The committee had approved the policy for consultation in January and this report highlighted the results of the consultation.

The Cumulative Impact Policy allowed the council to have a starting point of refusing applications in the town centre. Changes to legislation now required that the council publish evidence to support the policy.

Details of the consultation and responses were set out in the report and appendices. Most were broadly in support of the proposed policy and comments related to specific premises had been passed to relevant authorities. Further responses related to the Special Licensing Areas (SLA) where there were had been concerns around street drinking, licensing hours and litter. There was no opposition to creating a SLA to cover areas which had previously been covered by a cumulative impact policy.

Turning to the amendments to the references to the Equality Act, this was to replace old wording and to specify the duty to fulfil the act, rather than due to the negative impact of the previous policy wording. The policy went above and beyond what was required in the government guidance in promoting the Equality Act.

Environmental Health and the Police were in support of the policy. The Police had expressed legitimate concerns about the impact of Covid 19 on the night time economy. It was noted that licensing sub-committees could depart from the policy should there be good reasons and the policy would not be in place in perpetuity and would be reviewed.

Regarding the existing policy area in Queens Road, there were no changes to the existing policy but the section that ran through the Atria Centre was now part of the SLA.

The expiry date of the policy had been retained so it could be reviewed soon to take into account the changing nature of the town centre.

It was noted that the committee were not proposing any further amendments to the policy.

RESOLVED –

1. that the committee approves the amendments to the draft SLP and CIA as a result of the consultation.
2. that the Licensing Committee recommends that the new Statement of Licensing Policy, attached at appendix 1, and Cumulative Impact Assessment, attached at appendix 2, be adopted by the Council, as the licensing authority, at its meeting on 16th March 2021.

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Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy 2021-2026

The committee received the report of the Business Compliance Officer recommending the adoption of a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy. Changes to existing policies had been necessitated by the publication of the Department for Transport Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Standards in July 2020.

The Business Compliance Officer introduced the report. This was the final report on the process of updating this policy updating and bringing together a number of existing policies into one document as recommended by the standards.

A public consultation had taken place following the Licensing Committee meeting in January. This had been advertised on the council's website and social media, details were sent to licence holders and other licensing authorities and audio versions of consultation were created for accessibility. While there were fewer responses than had been hoped, reflective of the current situation, they were broadly favourable or neutral. One comment was received from the taxi trade in support of the policy, one another trade response received contained questions which were answered, issues were raised by Disability Watford which had been taken into account and the police had no comments.

The policy did not make a large number of significant changes beyond the creation of a single policy document. An equalities impact assessment had been conducted and was appended to the report. The main impacts were on drivers and operators with few changes to the vehicle or suitability policies. A few typography errors had also been addressed.

Following a question about the accessibility of the policy and whether it would be available in translation, the committee was advised that policies were not

published in a number of languages. The Department for Transport required that drivers be tested on their written and spoken English, which was assessed through the other assessments drivers had to take. There had been no complaints about drivers' comprehension and it was not an issue when delivering face-to-face training. It was, however, recognised that it was a complex document, and a subset of documents would also be created with diagrams and a clearer layout to assist drivers.

RESOLVED –

that the Licensing Committee approves the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2021 - 2026 as found at Appendix 1 to the report.

Chair
Licensing Committee

The Meeting started at 7.10 pm
and finished at 7.40 pm