

LICENSING COMMITTEE

13 September 2017

Present: - Councillors Julie Young (Chairman), Nick Cope, John Elliott, Dave Harris, Theresa Higgins, Mike Hogg, Darius Laws and Patricia Moore

Substitute Member: - Councillor Pauline Hazell for Councillor Roger Buston

30. Presentation on Air Quality

Belinda Silkstone, Environmental Protection & Animal Services Manager, and Tim Savage from Essex County Council gave a talk on Air Quality. Mrs Silkstone informed the Committee that Colchester had four declared Air Quality Management areas, with the largest of these in Area 1 which covered the Town Centre. Mr Savage then explained the options available to reduce taxi emissions: Changing the licensing conditions to only grant new licences to vehicles that were either fully electric or hybrid; Euro 5 for diesel vehicles or Euro 4 petrol vehicles from September 2018 and Euro 6 for diesel vehicles and Euro 4 for petrol vehicles from 2020. A further licensing condition was suggested that to specify that all vehicles must meet an LPG, low emission or electric/hybrid standard from January 2025.

The Committee asked Mrs Silkstone about the current provision of electric charging power points and the proposals to broaden coverage of such facilities to support the promotion of promoting electric hackney carriage and private hire vehicles. Mrs Silkstone informed the Committee that the Council were currently looking at charging points within the town centre but it was in the early stages at the moment.

31. Taxi Policy Report

The Committee considered the draft Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Licensing Policy and report by the Assistant Director of Environment. The Committee's approval of the draft policy was sought to enable the consultation process to begin.

The Committee acknowledged the work of officers in updating the Policy. The Committee sought clarification on matters in relation to school parking, drop offs and parking on pedestrian crossings and what could be done to prevent such actions. Mr Ruder informed the Committee that these were all highways issues but if a persistent offender was identified penalty points maybe given on their licence. In general enforcement of such matters would be a Police matter.

The needs of those with disabilities were discussed and in response to the issues raised Mr Ruder agreed to include in the Policy a list of assistance dogs that must be carried; investigate a way in which wheelchair accessible vehicles could be easily identified by

potential users; and

The Committee agreed that the Convictions Policy was an excellent piece of work and made it very clear to all potential applicants the likelihood of them being granted a licence if they had received a previous convictions. The Committee also asked about CCTV in taxis and whether any financial help could be given in the event that its installation was made mandatory. Mr Ruder informed the Committee that further work was necessary to look at the systems and how they could be provided; the issue of funding would be looked at as part of this work.

RESOLVED that the draft Taxi Policy Report be approved for consultation purposes.

32. Licensing Policy Changes

The Committee considered proposed amendments to the Licensing Policy as outlined by the Assistant Director of Environment. Mrs Harrington informed the Committee that in light of experience gained from previous hearings it had become apparent the the wording within the Policy; particularly in relation to the Old Town Zone, was causing some misunderstanding amongst applicants who mistakenly considered that the Council had adopted a cumulative impact policy. The proposed changes were designed to make it clear to applicants that the presumption of grant remained and that each case would be considered on its own merits. The Policy set out the Council's expectations and was there for the guidance of all applicants.

The Committee questioned the fact that fire sprinklers were not mentioned within the Policy, especially after recent events in London. Mr Ruder informed the Committee that this was not a licensing issue. Fire Safety was a matter for the Fire Authority and planning. However, the relationship between Licensing and the Fire Authority was very good and there was a ready flow of information between the authorities to deal with matters of concern.

RESOLVED that the proposed amendments to the Licensing Policy be approved.

33. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 5 and 7 July 2017 be approved as a correct record.