

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee
held in Committee Room Two, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon
at 10:00am on Thursday 23 January 2020

PRESENT

Councillors: Norman MacRae MBE (Chairman), Steve Good (Vice-Chairman), Dave Jackson, Ed James and Geoff Saul.

Officers: Michelle Bignell, Service Leader, Licensing & Business Support, ERS and Amy Barnes, Senior Strategic Support Officer.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

There were no apologies for absence or temporary appointments.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC

No submissions were received from the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

21. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee being of the opinion that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during the following items of business there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (Information relating to any individual / Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual) the public be excluded from the meeting.

22. REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION FROM DISPLAYING A PRIVATE HIRE PLATE

The Sub-Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager of Residential Services regarding an application for an exemption from displaying a licence plate on a private hire vehicle.

Mrs Bignell, presented her report which explained that the applicant had recently become a private hire operator and driver with the Council. The applicant had stated a number of reasons as to why he did not wish to display a private hire plate in his vehicle and had put in a request that the Licensing Sub-Committee consider making an exception in this instance.

The applicant was then interviewed by the Sub-Committee and presented his case for the exemption.

The Sub-Committee then withdrew to determine the application and, having considered the report and the evidence given by the applicant, the Sub-Committee:-

RESOLVED: That an exemption from displaying a licence plate on a private hire vehicle be refused.

(The meeting resumed in public session)

23. MISCELLANEOUS LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE WORK IN 2020/21

The Sub-Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager of Residential Services which updated Members on the licensing work plan for 2020/21.

The report advised that a number of policy reviews would be taking place in 2020 including the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, Street Trading Policy and the three year statutory review of the Statement of Licensing Policy.

In 2017, the government had set up a Task and Finish Group to look at Taxi and Private Hire Legislation. The group had met and produced a report of recommendations which was attached as Appendix A to the report.

Another piece of work to be undertaken was researching the requirements of CCTV in licensed vehicles and the Licensing Service Leader would be working closely with the Chairman on this matter.

Members discussed how CCTV footage had the potential to protect the driver and the passenger, the hard drive would remain in the car and the Data Controller would be WODC. Discussions were ongoing as to retention timeframes, how the data would be stored and who would have access to it.

With regards to the introduction of more electric vehicles, it was noted that the County's aspirations were that all taxis would be 'clean' by 2025. However, the location of the charging points was still up for consideration. Following a question from Councillor Good, Mrs Bignell advised that drivers would be consulted to obtain information on the cars currently being used in the District. Technology of hybrid and electric vehicles was changing all the time and officers were liaising with the Climate Action Manager to discuss potential ways forward.

It was noted that it would be difficult to enforce a blanket change to all licensed vehicles in the District and a stepped approach may be more achievable. The potential of a reduced licence fee for the first drivers or operators to move to 'clean' vehicles was suggested.

Officers also advised that a five year review was due on the Street Trading Policy and any changes to policy would be consulted on in the first instance.

With regards the Statement of Licensing Policy, officers explained that updates were needed following amendments to the Immigration Act.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Bignell and the licensing team for their work and for continuing to be pro-active, building good relationships with the Police and PubWatch.

Following a number of issues raised by Members regarding some drivers refusing fares or overcharging, Mrs Bignell requested that the information be forwarded to her directly, so that any investigations, if necessary, could be undertaken.

The Sub-Committee also debated the suitability of publishing a price list at taxi ranks, to enable the public to understand how much they should expect to pay for journeys. It was noted that fare information should already be on display inside the vehicle. Officers highlighted that any signage erected on the highway would need the consent of the landowner and a lot of information was available on the Council's website and social media platforms. Having considered the report, Members

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 10.52 am

CHAIRMAN