

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 31st January 2018 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 7.43pm

Present: Councillors John Chandler (Chairman), Paul Elderton (Vice-Chairman), Tim Ashton, Metin Huseyin, Wayne Monkman, and Patricia Wiltshire.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Cooksey, Bridget Kendrick David Mir and Charles Yarwood.

3. Disclosure of Interests

None declared.

4. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

The Chairman introduced the report and provided an overview of the appendices.

The Committee discussed the level of responses and noted that Mole Valley received the 2nd highest number of responses across Surrey. The Senior Licensing Officer advised that Reigate and Banstead Borough Council may have received more responses due to the greater number of taxi licences held across the district. It was also noted that Reigate and Banstead Borough Council were able to contact their taxi and private hire drivers by email, however Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) do not currently hold these contact details for the licence holders in the district. The Committee were advised that gathering email addresses through the licence renewal process would be implemented to aid communication in future.

Members highlighted that the responses from the taxi and private hire trade were slightly less favourable towards the training than residents. The Senior Licensing Officer advised that the training would be delivered online, in a PowerPoint style format including multiple choice questions. Concerns were raised regarding whether all drivers would have access to the required technology, potential language and educational barriers. The Committee were advised that the Licensing Team are in contact with taxi and private hire drivers and are working at communicating that the training would be implemented to support them. It was further noted that should any taxi and private hire drivers encounter serious difficulties with completing the training online, they can be supported further.

The Committee queried the effectiveness of the training and were advised that online training is generally effective. Concerns were raised regarding how Officers could be certain that the training had been completed by the taxi or private hire licence holder. It was noted that this could be tackled when drivers renew their licence, should the Licensing Team have concerns. This would be achieved by asking the relevant driver about questions they completed. The Committee proposed that the training could be completed online, with the test undertaken at a test centre where the identity of a driver could be verified. The Senior Licensing Officer advised that this would have resource implications. The benefit of offering online training would be that it can be completed at the driver's convenience. For a smaller number of drivers, it could be possible to conduct tests at these centres if required. Members stated that the cost should not eliminate test centres as an option. The Senior Licensing Officer agreed to discuss this with the Strategic Partnership Manager for Licensing and the taxi and private hire representatives.

The Committee questioned the rationale for MVDC funding the training for the taxi and private hire drivers, as they are self-employed. Officers confirmed that a central fund would

be used to pay for existing drivers to receive the training, however it was noted that new taxi drivers would need to fund the training themselves.

Members questioned the procurement process and content of the training. The Committee were advised that the content has not been finalised because the procurement process is not yet complete. Once it has been completed, the Committee could be supplied with copies of the training. The Senior Licensing Officer stated that the procurement process should ensure that they achieved the best value for money.

RESOLVED: The Licensing Committee agreed to recommend to Council that:

1. The revised Taxi and Private Hire Convictions Policy be adopted to replace the current Policy Statement on Convictions and to update the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy to refer to the new convictions policy.
2. The requirement for all existing taxi and private hire drivers to undertake mandatory training on Child Sexual Exploitation and Safeguarding by 1 May 2019 be approved.
3. The requirement for all new taxi and private hire drivers to undertake mandatory training on Child Sexual Exploitation and Safeguarding from the 11 April 2018 be approved.
4. The Head of Service for Environmental Health and Licensing, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Parking, be authorised to make such minor amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy as may be required from time to time.

5. Urgent Items

None.

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Chairman

Date: