

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Licensing Committee** held at the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil on Tuesday 10 September 2019.**

(10.00 - 11.00 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor David Recardo (Chairman)

Wes Read Kevin Messenger
Linda Vijeh Andy Soughton

Officers

Jo Morris Case Services Officer (Support Services)
Ann Chislett Specialist - Legal
Anita Legg Specialist - Licensing
Rachel Lloyd Specialist - Licensing
Vicki Dawson Lead Specialist (Environmental Health)

Note: All decisions were approved without dissent unless shown otherwise.

7. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on Tuesday 3rd June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the Licensing Sub Committee meetings held on 28th January 2019, 18th April 2019 and 17th June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jason Baker, Dave Bulmer, Karl Gill, Tony Lock, Crispin Raikes and William Wallace.

9. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

10. Public Participation at Committees (Agenda Item 4)

The Committee was addressed by three members of the public. Comments raised related to the following:

- Lack of communication about Licensing Committee meetings.

- The difficulties with loading electric scooters into estate vehicles.
- Wheelchair accessible vehicles being unsuitable for long journeys to the airport.
- Anti-social behaviour experienced by taxi drivers.
- Many customers preferred to travel in a non-wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Questioned why taxi drivers had to change their cars to wheelchair accessible vehicles?
- What could be done to protect taxi drivers?

The Chairman noted the comments made and in response advised that the agendas and meeting dates for the Licensing Committee were published on the Council's website. With regard to the requirement for wheelchair accessible vehicles, he explained that the Council had adopted the Taxi Licensing Policy to bring the Council in line with other authorities and that the Licensing Committee would be discussing the policy as part of the next agenda item.

11. Update on the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Licensing Policy (Agenda Item 5)

The Specialist – Licensing introduced her report and explained that Full Council had adopted the South Somerset District Council – Taxi Licensing Policy in November 2014 which took effect from 1st April 2015. The policy stated that all new vehicle applications would be restricted to purpose built wheelchair accessible vehicles and that at least 20% of licensed hackney carriage vehicles must be wheelchair accessible. The policy recommended that when the 20% target had been achieved the Licensing Committee would be provided with an update and a review of the policy should take place.

The Specialist – Licensing advised that 40.8% of licensed hackney carriage vehicles were currently wheelchair accessible and that five requests to date had been received to request that the Council depart from Policy and allow non-wheelchair accessible vehicles to be licensed as Hackney Carriage Vehicles. One request was previously submitted and agreed and the other four were due to be considered at this meeting.

The Specialist - Licensing recommended that further investigation should take place to establish if the policy is meeting demand, exceeding demand or if there is lack of provision for passengers who use wheelchairs. There was not enough information currently available to make a proper assessment.

Members were advised that some comments had been received about the taxi rank on Old Station Road, Yeovil as it could only be used by wheelchair accessible vehicles and felt that further investigation was required into the use of the rank.

During the discussion on the taxi rank at Old Station Road, members made the following comments:

- Wheelchair accessible vehicles were not using the rank and non-wheelchair accessible taxis were often moved on from the rank.
- Expressed support for changing the layout of the taxi rank to remark six bays for use by non-wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- The taxi rank was located next to a hotel and in the middle of the night time economy.
- It seemed logical to have another taxi rank at the other end of the town.

At the conclusion of the debate, members supported investigation into the possibility of changing the layout of the taxi rank on Old Station Road, Yeovil to include two bays for wheelchair accessible vehicles and the remainder for non-wheelchair accessible vehicles. The outcome of the investigation to be reported back to the Licensing Committee.

During the discussion on the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Policy, members made the following comments:

- As the Council had exceeded its target for wheelchair accessible vehicles, it was felt that new vehicles should be accepted.
- Need to be careful how and when we gather evidence to make sure it stands up to scrutiny.
- Providing a small ramp would provide an inexpensive and cost effective way of enabling people with mobility issues to use a taxi.
- The use of alternative fuel vehicles should be explored as part of the investigation.

At the conclusion of the debate, members supported investigation to determine if the figure of 20% is ensuring better access to taxis for disabled passengers.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That investigation take place to determine if the figure of 20% is ensuring better access to taxis for disabled passengers.
 - (2) That investigation take place into the possibility of changing the layout of the taxi rank on Old Station Road, Yeovil to include two bays for wheelchair accessible vehicles and the remainder for non-wheelchair accessible vehicles.

(Voting: unanimous)

12. Request for Permission to apply for a non-wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence (1) (Confidential) (Agenda Item 6)

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Prior to considering the requests submitted for permission to apply for a non-wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence, the Committee resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for agenda items 6,7,8 and 9 in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

The Chairman amended the order of the agenda and took agenda item 7 first followed by agenda items 9, 6 and 8.

Members considered the request submitted by the applicant outlined in the agenda report.

Members unanimously approved the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible.

RESOLVED: That the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for

a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible be approved.

(Voting: unanimous)

13. Request for Permission to apply for a non-wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence (2) (Confidential) (Agenda Item 7)

This item was considered in closed session.

The Specialist – Licensing introduced the report.

The Committee was addressed by the applicant who explained the reasons for his request.

In response to a question, members were advised by the Specialist – Licensing and Lead Specialist – Environmental Health that each application should be considered on its own merits and confirmed that the Committee had the authority to depart from policy if there were sufficient grounds to do so.

Members considered the request whilst taking into account the reasons outlined by applicant at the meeting and the information contained in the agenda report.

Members unanimously approved the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible.

RESOLVED: That the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible be approved.

(Voting: unanimous)

14. Request for Permission to apply for a non-wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence (3) (Confidential) (Agenda Item 8)

This item was considered in closed session.

Members considered the request submitted by the applicant outlined in the agenda report.

Members unanimously approved the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible.

RESOLVED: That the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible be approved.

(Voting: unanimous)

15. Request for Permission to apply for a non-wheelchair accessible Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence (4) (Confidential) (Agenda Item 9)

This item was considered in closed session.

The Specialist – Licensing introduced the report.

The Committee was addressed by the applicant who explained the reasons for his request.

Members considered the request whilst taking into account the reasons outlined by applicant at the meeting and the information contained in the agenda report.

Members unanimously approved the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible.

RESOLVED: That the request to allow the taxi driver to submit an application for a vehicle which is less than 5 years old and not wheelchair accessible be approved.

(Voting: unanimous)

16. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 10)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee would be held on Tuesday 10th December 2019 at 10.00am in Council Chamber B, the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman

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Date