

## SWT Licensing Committee - 18 January 2021

Present: Councillor Mark Lithgow (Chair)

Councillors Janet Lloyd, Paul Bolton, Simon Coles, Caroline Ellis, Andrew Hadley, Marcia Hill, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Martin Peters, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully and Loretta Whetlor

Officers: Clare Rendell and John Rendell

Also Present: Councillors Craig Palmer, Peter Pilkington, Sarah Wakefield and Brenda Weston

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 8. Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor John Hassall.

### 9. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Licensing Committee

(Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 15 June 2020 circulated with the agenda)

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 15 June 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

### 10. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr P Bolton	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Arundel		
Cllr C Palmer	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Timberscombe	Personal	Spoke
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted

## 11. Public Participation

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

## 12. Licensing Quarterly Update Report

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Concern was raised that Taunton did not have a Town Council to consult with as part of the Pavement Licence application process. Councillors queried how would the Licensing Department consult on applications in the Taunton area.

*The Licensing Specialist understood that there wasn't a Town Council for Taunton and he hoped that the other organisations for the area would highlight any issues on an application. However, he was happy to add the Taunton Chartered Trustees to the list of consulted parties.*
- Councillors queried how the Taxi Forum would operate in the new joint area of Somerset West and Taunton (SWT). They appreciated that it was a valuable way of discussing and consulting with the taxi trade but concern was raised on the amount of time that could be wasted travelling to different venues across the district.

*The Licensing Specialist acknowledged that the taxi forum had worked well over the years and so he was keen to reinstate it for the wider SWT area. He advised that due to the technological advances SWT had made as a result of the periods of lockdown during the Covid Pandemic, he would most likely hold the taxi forum using a virtual meeting format, which would eliminate the need for the taxi drivers to travel to any set location.*
- Councillors queried whether the changeover to expression of interest forms instead of application forms for Street Trading Consent had improved the process. They had noticed a drop in the applications received but had assumed that was because of the Covid Pandemic.

*The Licensing Specialist advised that he wanted to introduce the use of the expression of interest forms to assist the applicants in gauging whether their request would be successful or not prior to them submitting a formal application. It also allowed the Licensing Department to control the types trading activity to ensure that the applications submitted would enhance and compliment the area rather than have a detrimental impact on the other local traders.*

- Councillors queried when the mandatory safeguarding training for taxi drivers would start.  
*The Licensing Specialist explained that it was difficult to pick a specific date for when the training would start as there were several factors that still needed to be decided on: how the training would be delivered; which format would be used; whether it would only apply to new drivers; to name but a few. However, he acknowledged that it was a vital part of ensuring that they had fit and proper licensed taxi drivers.*
- Councillors queried whether there was a knowledge test for taxi drivers in the SWT area to ensure that the drivers had a good knowledge of the local area.  
*The Licensing Specialist explained that there used to be a knowledge test as part of the application process and he was keen to get it added back into the process. He advised that the majority of the development work on the test had been carried out, so they should be able to introduce the test back into the process in the next couple of months.*
- Councillors urged the Licensing Specialist to ensure that the list of designated wheelchair accessible taxi vehicles was made available as soon as possible.  
*The Licensing Specialist apologised that the list had not yet been compiled and that it was part of the work programme to be completed. However, he reassured councillors that the Licensing Department could enforce how the taxi drivers treated any disabled users.*
- Councillors queried how far along had the Licensing Department got with the introduction of electric taxi vehicles and charging points.  
*The Licensing Specialist explained that he could establish the use of electric vehicles as part of the taxi trade, however, the infrastructure to support those vehicles was not quite in place for the SWT area.*
- Concern was raised that there was a lack of wheelchair accessible taxis available to use in the evenings.  
*The Licensing Specialist understood the concern and explained that it was due to when the policy had been introduced, which meant that there was a mix of vehicles within the taxi trade. He advised that he could investigate the options of making all taxis wheelchair accessible.*
- Councillors queried whether the amount of applications received with minuses next to their figures, was due to the lockdown period caused by the Covid Pandemic.  
*The Licensing Specialist assumed that it was as a result of the Covid Pandemic, but that it was an educated guess as he had not been able to discuss this with all the applicants.*
- Councillors queried what was required from the taxi drivers in relation to the Equalities Act and was it clearly stated somewhere in the application process so that they knew what was expected of them.  
*The Licensing Specialist advised it was incorporated in the knowledge and suitability questionnaire that all taxi drivers had to complete. There was also information available in the Taxi Handbook, which all taxi drivers were expected to read.*
- Councillors queried whether signage could be displayed in all taxis advising that discrimination of any kind would not be tolerated, which would show that SWT supported the disability and minority groups.

*The Licensing Specialist agreed and was happy to look into implementing that type of signage.*

**Resolved** that the Licensing Committee noted the Update Report.

(The Meeting ended at 7.11 pm)

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