

## **LICENSING PANEL**

**7 September 2015**

PRESENT: Councillors Carwyn Cox (Vice Chairman), Malcolm Alexander, Phillip Bicknell, John Collins (substituting for Councillor David Hilton), Jesse Grey, Maureen Hunt, Andrew Jenner, Sayonara Luxton, Wesley Richards, Derek Sharp and Derek Wilson (substituting for Councillor Charles Hollingsworth).

Officers: Alan Barwise, Will Cottrell, Steve Johnson and Shilpa Manek.

### **PART I**

#### **08/15     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hashim Bhatti, John Bowden, David Hilton, Charles Hollingsworth and Asghar Majeed.

#### **09/15     DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **10/15     MINUTES**

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14 July 2015 be approved.**

#### **11/15     THREE YEAR DRIVER LICENSES**

Steve Johnson, Enforcement Principal, explained that the Deregulation Act 2015 had changed the law in relation to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers and Private Hire operators. The new provisions are due to come into force on 1 October 2015.

Currently the borough issues one year licenses. The new Act instructs all local authorities to issue 3 and 5 years licenses respectively, however, also keep the one year licences available. The main consideration would be the cost of offering the 3 and 5 years respectively.

Councillor Hunt expressed concern of why anyone would want a one year license. Steve Johnson explained the main reason was financial and also that drivers may not want to commit for 3 or 5 years.

Steve Johnson explained that the borough could not have a blanket position for 3 and 5 years.

Councillor Jenner disagreed and expressed that the borough should only offer 3 and 5 years licenses and encourage the purchase of these in place of one year licenses by reducing the 3 and 5 license fee and increasing the one year license fee.

Steve Johnson explained that the new Act was law and the option of the one year license being available was part of the new Act.

Alan Barwise, Licensing Manager, explained and informed the Panel that one year licenses had always been issued by the borough and officers as the borough preferred this as it was better to see the drivers annually and check their photo and details and also confirm that the person that the license was being issued to was the person who was the driver and check the vehicle.

Other points highlighted and discussed included:

- Awaiting central government guidance.
- No best practice guidance from Department of Transport.
- Bureaucracy and work would increase and be more expensive.
- Try a staggered fee system to encourage applicants to buy the longer duration.
- Protection of users of carriages crucial.
- Fees charged relate to processing of the license.
- Income to council would be reduced.
- Addition of an administration fee.
- Safeguarding element of concern, as a borough, procedures need to be in place to ensure safeguarding.
- Offer the 3 and 5 year license but continue with annual checks, comply but save on costs.
- Situation to be clarified for drivers to advise that 3 and 5 years licenses would be available with vehicle and driver clearance checked annually.
- Put new terms and conditions in place.
- Checking licenses concerns discussed.

The Chairman summed up the discussions explaining that as a local authority, we would have to comply to legislation and would still have to manage the changes going forward in relation to safeguarding.

The Chairman suggested that the item be circulated to members to consider all options.

The Panel **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** the officer's recommendation subject to appropriate conditions being referred to the October Panel.

## 12/15 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the next meeting of the Licensing Panel would be 13 October 2015,

## 13/15 MEETING

The meeting, which began at 6.00pm, ended at 7.30pm.

Chairman.....Date.....