

LICENSING COMMITTEE
7TH JULY 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 7th July 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor Tony Sharps (Chairman)

Councillors: Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Mike Lowe, Richard Lloyd, Ralph Small, Martin White and Andy Williams.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Licensing Team Leader and Team Leader - Democratic Services.

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Richard Lloyd was moved and seconded as Vice-Chair of the Committee. A further nomination of Councillor Ralph Small was moved and seconded. Following the second nomination, Councillor Lloyd requested that his nomination was withdrawn, which it duly was.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Ralph Small be appointed Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee for 2021/22.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andy Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item number 5 – Changes to Taxi and Private Hire Licensing.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2019 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. CHANGES TO TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the report and explained that the Department for Transport DfT had recently published the document “Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards”. In addition, Welsh Government (WG) had recently published the document Harmonisation of Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing in Wales”. Both of those documents affected Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing.

The Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards focussed on protecting children and vulnerable adults. The DfT stated that following a detailed consultation it was clear there was a consensus that common core minimum standards were required to better regulate the taxi and private high vehicle sector.

The Harmonisation of Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing in Wales. That document followed Welsh Government's white paper 'Improving Public Transport' published in 2018. The aim of the recommendations contained in the document was to provide 'quick fixes' to improve the consistency of licensing standards and increase public safety across Wales. The recommendations formed the basis for further development by Welsh Government (WG) into national standards.

There were five reasons outlined by WG to adopt the recommendations, public safety being the first. The public should be able to expect a licensed driver to be competent, honest, safe and trustworthy.

The DfT statutory standards and the WG's Harmonisation of Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing recommendations introduced a number of changes that Local Authorities would need to adopt. In summary, the main changes are listed below:

Drivers

- Requirement for drivers to join the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Update Service and have a DBS check every 6 months
- Use of the National Database for Refusal and Revocations of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers
- Overseas criminal record check for drivers
- Adopting the WG's Driver Code of Conduct
- Updating the Private Hire Driver Conditions in line with the WG's recommendations

Vehicles

- Requirement for vehicle proprietors to have an annual DBS check
- Overseas criminal record check
- Adopting the WG's policy on CCTV and Video Point of Impact Systems (VIPS)/Dash Cams in taxis and private hire vehicles
- Impose the WG's recommendations for accessibility conditions on vehicle proprietors of taxis and private hire vehicles

General

- Standardised application forms across Wales
- To commit to reviewing any Taxi Licensing Policy every five years in accordance with the DfT's Statutory Standards.

It was proposed that an overarching Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy would be drafted, for consideration by the Committee, to incorporate all

of the smaller policies and procedures currently in place into one document, and to incorporate the standards set out in the WG document.

In response to a question from Councillor Rosetta Dolphin, the Licensing Team Leader said that although it wasn't a mandatory requirement, all taxi drivers were encouraged to install CCTV in their vehicles as it was for the safety of everybody.

Councillor Mike Lowe asked if the rules within the policy would apply to taxis coming into Wales from England. The Licensing Team Leader explained that the DfT guidance applied in both England and Wales.

In response to a question from Councillor Lloyd, the Licensing Team Leader explained that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council linked up with North Wales Police and carried out spot checks on private hire vehicles and she was pleased to say there was a high compliance rate. Also, a full MOT was required for Private Hire / Hackney Carriages every 6 months. Since the pandemic however, the spot checks had not been able to be carried out.

Councillor Sharps asked if the Licensing Team Leader could prepare a brief report for the Committee on any incidents the department had dealt with since the pandemic, and also details of any decisions taken under delegated powers.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That Members have regard to the two documents when considering any Taxi and Private Hire Licensing matters.

5. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public present.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 10.30 a.m.)

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Chairman