



LICENSING COMMITTEE

18 JULY 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors Barton-Brown (Chairman), Ainsley, T. Gibson, Hart, Knott, Mumford, Savage and Walter.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Acott and Greig

6. MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were none.

7. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 23 November 2022, were agreed as a correct record.

A member raised concern regarding on outstanding Licensing matter and requested it be progressed with Legal and Licensing as well as being feedback to the Chief Executive for comment. It was explained that the comments were noted, and this would taken up with the Chief Executive for comment.

7. APPOINTMENT OF TASK & FINISH GROUP – HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY REVIEW

The committee were invited to appoint a Task & Finish Group to undertake a review of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

Public Safety is the reason why the licensing of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Drivers and Operators is regulated.

The Department for Transport, (DfT) recommends all licensing authorities make publicly available a cohesive policy document that brings together all their procedures on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing.

The Hackney Carriage Taxi & Private Hire Policy, February 2022 was reviewed in 2021 to incorporate the (DfT) 'Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards 2020 which the Government recommended all local authorities adopt.

Members considered the report and were invited to ask questions. A discussion was had surrounding the membership.

It is proposed that the Task & Finish Group should comprise of Eight members of the Committee and should be politically balanced, in which case the membership

would be three members from both Canvey Island Independent Group and the Peoples Independent Party with two members from the Conservative Group.

The Group leaders have been asked to identify members to serve on the Task & Finish Group.

A member asked whether, Cllr W. Gibson, could attend the Task & Finish Group purely as an observer/advisor. It was suggested that this be an item for consideration at the first meeting.

During discussion some members expressed their disappointment of there being no officers from the Licensing Team in attendance at this meeting and expect that there will be support from licensing going forward, as well as attendance at the Licensing Committees and Task & Finish Groups in future.

Following discussion, it was: -

Resolved

To appoint a Task & Finish Group to review the Council's Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Policy

8. PETITION – BRING BACK THE CASTLE POINT KNOWLEDGE TEST

The committee considered the request, a petition having been presented to Ordinary Council in October 2019 to bring back the Private Hire Drivers knowledge test as part of the review of the Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Licensing Policy.

At the Cabinet meeting in January 2020 a report was made explaining that no action would be taken to restore the knowledge test for private hire drivers. (The knowledge test for Hackney Carriage drivers is still required).

The petition was recently resubmitted with additional signatures. However, some of the signatures are incomplete, and it is not possible to identify some of the signatures. There are no dates as to when the signatures were obtained.

The knowledge test for private hire drivers was removed in November 2016.

Members were invited to ask questions, during discussion a member asked it to be minuted that they were, deeply disappointed with the behaviour of some of the staff in the Licensing Team and the service provided, requesting an Audit be undertaken of the Licensing Service in light of a recent matter and the length of time it had been going on for. It was explained that this would be noted and feedback to the Head of Licensing and the Chief Executive.

Resolved

To refer the petition to be considered in the review of the Hackney Carriage Taxi & Private Hire Policy at the Task and Finish Group.

Licensing Committee – 18 July 2023

Chairman