
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE, 10.03.14

Present: Councillor W. Tudor Owen (Chairman)
Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: Eddie Dogan, Huw Edwards, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Dilwyn Lloyd, Peter Read, Angela Russell, Ann Williams, Elfed W. Williams.

Also Present: Siôn Huws (Compliance and Language Manager), Gwenan M. Williams (Licensing Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Councillor W. Tudor Owen welcomed everyone to the Committee.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Llywarch Bowen Jones, Gethin Glyn Williams.

2. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. **URGENT ITEMS**

No item to consider.

4. **MINUTES**

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 16 September, 2013, as a true record.

5. **MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE**

Submitted – for information, minutes of the meetings of the General Licensing Sub-committee held on 16 September 2013, 28 October 2013 and 29 January 2014.

Officers were thanked for their support at the Sub-committees.

RESOLVED TO ACCEPT THE INFORMATION.

6. **UPDATING THE RELEVANT CONVICTIONS POLICY IN RESPECT OF THE LICENSING OF TAXI DRIVERS**

Submitted – the report of the Head of Regulatory Department. It was explained that the Authority had already adopted guidance on relevant convictions as part of the Taxi Policy – the guidelines were used by officers

and Members in the determination of applications for driver licences from individuals who have relevant convictions on their DBS reports. The Council now reviewed their guidelines in relation to relevant convictions and had decided through the Licensing Technical Panel to propose an appropriate update for current situations in the taxi licensing field. It was noted that adopting these amended guidelines would ensure consistency with other Counties.

The main aim of the policy was to protect the public and try to provide guidance to anyone interested in public and private hire licensing.

In a case where licensing officers and the Licensing Sub-committee panel would use / address these guidelines to make a decision, it was outlined that each case would be considered on its individual merits. If circumstances required, the officer / panel could depart from those guidelines.

The Committee was asked to accept the update to the relevant guidelines. The new guidelines would be adopted by the Licensing Committee when the entire Taxi Licensing Policy had been reviewed.

In response to a question regarding the timetable of reviewing the Taxi Licensing Policy, the Licensing Manager elaborated that the Licensing Department would review the policy this year. It was reported that recommendations had not been released by the Law Commission. It was noted that the existing legislation was complex and dated, therefore, there was a need to adopt a policy that was relevant to current circumstances.

Other councils reviewing their policies – some undertaking small reviews while others were waiting for recommendations from the Law Commission. Collaboration and ensuring importance of local circumstances were a must when formulating a policy.

Main observations from the discussion:

There was a need to:

- update and modernise the guidelines;
- undertake regular checks on vehicles that were over ten years old to ensure they were suitable to transport passengers;
- issue penalty points to taxi drivers who did not e.g. display a badge or carry a fire extinguisher;
- penalise drivers who avoid health and safety issues by not maintaining their vehicles on a regular basis;
- be more thorough and firm with car checks. Reviews had been undertaken with garages; work to re-draw new and comprehensive guidelines was in the pipeline to ensure consistency;
- ensure consistency in the areas of Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd;
- have more than one Licensing Enforcement Officer in Gwynedd – the Council needed to behave in a reactive rather than in a preventative manner;
- gather the observations of taxi drivers. There would be an opportunity to consult with the industry when the entire taxi policy would be reviewed.

- It was proposed that drivers should be invited to the Committee to convey their observations. Agreed;
- ensure that the policy included detailed guidelines and that there were no inconsistencies.

It was resolved to accept the update to the relevant guidelines. The Compliance and Language Manager was asked to verify whether or not it would be possible to use the amended guidelines before a review of the Licensing Policy would be completed.

Everyone was thanked for their contribution.

The meeting commenced at 10:00am and concluded at 11:00am.