
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
10 June 2024

Attendance:

Councillors: Anwen Davies, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Gareth Tudor Jones, Linda Ann Jones, Edgar Wyn Owen, Huw Rowlands, Elfed Williams, Gwynfor Owen, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Angela Russell, Gareth Williams and Hefin Underwood

Officers: Gareth Jones (Assistant Head, Environment Department), Gwenan Mai Roberts (Licensing Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer)

1. TO ELECT A CHAIR FOR 2024/25

RESOLVED TO RE-ELECT COUNCILLOR ELFED WILLIAMS AS CHAIR FOR 2024/25.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR 2024/25

RESOLVED TO RE-ELECT COUNCILLOR GWYNFOR OWEN AS VICE-CHAIR FOR 2024/25.

3. APOLOGIES

None to note.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Arwyn Herald Roberts declared a personal interest in item 7 on the agenda, as he had a close connection with local taxi companies. Following guidance from the Licensing Manager it was not a prejudicial interest as it was a general update on the policy. He did not have to leave the meeting.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 4 March 2024, as a true record.

7. MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEES

Submitted and received, for information, the minutes of the General Licensing Sub-committees held on 20 March 2024 and 9 April 2024.

8. UPDATE ON THE POLICY FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Licensing Manager presented a verbal update on the policy for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles. She highlighted that the current policy was fragmented and included many policies therefore the intention was to create one document. She reiterated that there was not a specific cycle for reviewing the policy, but that some aspects needed updating. She noted that there was a delay in the work because the Welsh Government was expected to review legislation regarding reconciling the regulations of the taxi industry. However, a statement by the Welsh Government noted that the legislation would not come into force soon, therefore the Local Authorities were instructed to reconcile their own policies.

Regarding a timescale, once the policy had been reviewed, there would be a need to hold a consultation with the public and submit the draft policy to the Committee to highlight any adaptations. It was highlighted that although some aspects such as considering the age of the taxi vehicle, safeguarding training, presenting a fresh DBS every three years and that drivers over the age of 65 received a medical check-up every year were already in place and were being implemented, they did need to be included in the policy. As a result, the addition to the policy would not be new to the industry.

Observations arising from the ensuing discussion:

- a need to try and encourage better provision in the countryside.
- that the 'Suitability Criteria for Drivers and Operators' document was published in 2014, therefore it had dated and needed to be updated.

In response to the comments, the Licensing Manager noted that it was difficult to influence the numbers to come into the industry especially with some being attracted to urban work because there was no consistency of work in rural areas. However, the Licensing Unit would try and encourage better provision in the countryside.

The comment that the criteria document had dated and included some older aspects that would be reviewed was accepted. However, it was noted, although the document was published in 2014, that the content continued to pass the test. One element that needed to be included in the document were speeding points.

In response to a question as to whether bus drivers needed to be assessed through the same criteria, it was noted that bus driver applications were being approved through a different procedure (Wales Traffic Commissioner). It was added that the licensing policy was specifically for an 8-seater or less vehicle.

Thanks were given for the update.

The meeting commenced at 10:00 and concluded at 10:25.