
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
10 March 2025

Attendance:

Chair: Councillor Elfed Williams
Vice-chair: Councillor Gwynfor Owen

Councillors: Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Gareth Tudor Jones, Huw Rowlands, Arwyn Herald Roberts and Gareth Williams

Officers: Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department), Andrew Parry (Public Protection Manager (Trading Standards)), Gwenan Mai Roberts (Licensing Manager), Nia Grisdale (Legal Service Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Anwen Davies, Councillor Alan Jones Evans and Councillor Angela Russell.

Condolences were extended to Councillor Angela Russell following the recent death of her husband.

Councillor Linda Ann Jones, former member of the Licensing Committees, was thanked for her support to the Licensing Committees and Sub-committees during her time as a Plaid Cymru Member and best wishes were relayed to her.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note

3. URGENT ITEMS

Arrangements relating to the Public Protection Service Structure

A verbal report was received from the Assistant Head of the Environment Department, noting cuts to the Public Protection Service from 1 April 2025 in response to the Cabinet's decision in 2024 to save £100k. It was highlighted that the current arrangement included three managers responsible for three services within the Public Protection Service, but the cut, following a consultation period with staff on how to achieve cuts and retain expertise within the Service, meant removing vacant posts from the structure and re-structuring to two services with two managers and one team leader. The Licensing and Trading Standards service and the Environmental Health Service will come into force on 1 April 2025 with Andrew Parry, the current Public Protection (Trading Standards) manager, being appointed as the Trading Standards and Licensing manager. It was reported that the current Licensing Manager, Gwenan Mai Roberts, due to her experience and expertise in the field, will remain in post to mentor and lead the team.

Andrew Parry was welcomed to the meeting and he was congratulated on his appointment. Gwenan Mai Roberts was thanked for remaining with the Service - the Licensing Committee and Sub-committees benefited from her experience and expertise.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 11 November 2024, as a true record.

5. MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEES

Submitted and received, for information, the minutes of the General Licensing Sub-committees held on 17 December 2024, 2 December 2024 and 13 November 2024, as true records.

6. REVIEW OF CYNGOR GWYNEDD TAXI POLICIES

- **Combined Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driving Licensing Policy**
- **Hackney Carriages/Private Hire Vehicles Licensing Policy**
- **Private Hire Operators Licensing Policy**
- **Suitability Criteria for Drivers and Operators Policy**

The Head of Environment Department submitted a report which provided details on the background information of Gwynedd's current policies, as well as publications from the Welsh Government in response to trying to manage and reconcile the taxi industry, in accordance with the National Taxi Standards.

Members were reminded that, in September 2015, the Licensing Committee had appointed the Head of Environment Department to commence reviewing the policies, proposing a unified taxi policy for Gwynedd, instead of three separate policy documents. It was considered that presenting a unified policy would ensure a fair and consistent service, as well as meet the needs of the industry and users.

It was highlighted, in the context of National Standards, that the licensing conditions for drivers, vehicles and taxi operators in Gwynedd were already in line with the vast majority of the expectations contained in the Standards, but there was an intention to add some safeguarding measures to the licence application process. Measures such as ensuring that a licence applicant received a medical examination to DVLA Group 2 standard, that drivers completed Child Safeguarding Training as part of the application process for a licence and that checks on the national criminal intel system were carried out for every application for a new driver's licence, would be officially included in the new Unified Policy.

It was elaborated that the Committee, in the next 12 months, would get an opportunity to voice opinions on the unified draft policy, before the statutory public consultation was undertaken.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

Observations from Members arising from the ensuing discussion:

- The policies desperately needed to be updated
- The changes were to be welcomed and addressed the national standards

In response to a concern that drivers from outside of Gwynedd had the right to work in Gwynedd, it was noted that a national discussion had been held on the subject with a

review from the Welsh Government to try to ensure control over the Wales and England borders (Uber was an example of this). However, there was no current arrangement which allowed the refusal of cross-border work as long as an arrangement had been made beforehand. It was reiterated that the hope was that the Welsh Government revisited the agenda and attempted cross-border control in the future.

In response to a supplementary question that there was a need to work with bordering counties to ensure that drivers from outside of Gwynedd complied with Gwynedd's safety policies, it was noted that Gwynedd was part of an information-sharing system which implemented checks nationally. In rural areas, it was expressed that school transport agreements relied on operators from other counties, and there was good management of the situation to ensure that drivers and vehicles complied with the relevant requirements. The need to refer any suspicion of vehicles' and/or drivers' suitability to the Licensing Unit was emphasised and it was expressed that the work of aligning policies and conditions with other counties contributed to a safe and consistent service.

In response to a question regarding patient transport arrangements by the Health Service and that that arrangement was made through the service/hospital instead of the patient's wishes, it was noted that this arrangement was usually made through using a community transport service managed by the Traffic Commissioner. It was noted that the same precautions, such as a medical examination, a DBS check and record, and mechanical checks to the car were implemented in the same manner as the requirements of Cyngor Gwynedd's Licensing Unit.

In response to an observation about taxi drivers using their vehicles to transport goods, it was noted that there was no control over using the vehicle to this end, but that every effort was being made to ensure that the drivers had received safety training considering the number of visits/deliveries that they made and the different situations that they would likely come across.

RESOLVED:

- To accept the report
- To welcome reconciling a service across the County to meet the needs of the industry and users, keeping safety considerations as the core foundations in the direction of the policy
- To approve the need to review the policy in accordance with the principles agreed in 2017, and to align with National Standards

Councillor Elfed Williams took the opportunity to thank the Committee Members and the Officers for their support whilst he had been Chair of the Licensing Committees.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 and concluded at 10.40.