

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Monday, 19 June 2023 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Joan Butterfield, Gwyneth Ellis, Bobby Feeley, Hugh Irving, Alan James, Brian Jones, Delyth Jones, Paul Keddie, Win Mullen-James and Andrea Tomlin

Observer: Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones

ALSO PRESENT

Legal Officer (CL), Public Protection Business Manager (IM), Senior Licensing Officer (NJ), Licensing Officer (ES), Enforcement Officers (Licensing) (KB & NS) and Committee Administrators (KEJ & RTJ [Webcaster])

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor Michelle Blakeley-Walker

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declaration of interest had been raised.

3 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Nominations were sought for Chair of the Licensing Committee for 2023/24. Councillor Andrea Tomlin proposed, seconded by Councillor Hugh Irving, that Councillor Bobby Feeley be appointed Chair. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED that Councillor Bobby Feeley be appointed Chair of the Licensing Committee for the ensuing year.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Nominations were sought for Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee for 2023/24. Councillor Brian Jones proposed, seconded by Councillor Andrea Tomlin, that Councillor Hugh Irving be appointed Vice Chair. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED that Councillor Hugh Irving be appointed Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee for the ensuing year.

5 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

6 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 7 December 2022 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2022 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

7 UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE LICENSING SECTION IN 2022/23

The Public Protection Business Manager (PPBM) submitted a report (previously circulated) updating members on the work of the Licensing Section during 2022/23 which focused on both operational and management matters.

The report provided statistical data of the number of licences issued, complaints and service requests received covering the main functions – Alcohol and Entertainment; Hackney and Private Hire Licensing; Gambling, Gaming and Lotteries; Street Trading; Charity Collections and Scrap Metal together with other activities including service requests/freedom of information, overall workload results and communications. Management matters included reference to policies, fees and future workload considerations. The PPBM guided members through the report.

Members took the opportunity to discuss various aspects of the report with the PPBM who responded to questions and comments as follows –

- there were fewer applicants/drivers appearing before the committee which was a reflection of how well the current policy was working, with powers delegated to officers within the policy framework, and matters only being brought before members that involved deviation from policy in exceptional circumstances
- over the last twelve months there had been 34 new licensed driver applications and 24 licensed drivers leaving the profession resulting in an extra 10 licensed drivers during that period. However, there was a downward trend in the number of licensed drivers and vehicles generally
- it was reasonable to conclude that the reduction in the number of vehicle defects identified had been due to the effectiveness of the policy and testing regime
- it was agreed to include in future reports the number of premises licences surrendered in order to identify any trends/pressures, although it was noted that not all licences were surrendered when licensed premises ceased operating
- charitable collections involving putting clothing bags through letterboxes door to door were largely exempt from licensing due to charities holding Home Office Exemptions
- provided assurances that there was regular communication via email with the taxi trade which included highlighting the defects identified following vehicle inspections in order to raise awareness of those issues
- serious vehicle safety defects would involve suspension of the licence pending completion of the required works but vehicles with minor defects could continue operating with a notice of relevant works for completion within a set time period
- most complaints received in relation to licensed premises were linked to noise nuisance and predominantly an issue for Pollution Control, with the remit of Licensing Officers confined to ensuring licensing conditions were met. However, both Licensing and Pollution Control Officers worked closely together with a view to resolving issues of noise nuisance linked to licensed premises

- elaborated on the role and remit of the Personal Licence Holder and Designated Premises Supervisor in the operation of licensed premises; detailed the differences between Street Trading Permits issued by the Council and Pedlar's Certificates issued by the Police; and reported on the requirements for Scrap Metal Licences including separate licences for both sites and collectors
- reference to taxi licences issued could be found on the Council's website and once the work on the new database was completed it was hoped that information on all licences issued would be available for the public to view
- despite the continuing move to online processing the option remained for cash and cheque payments via One Stop Shops and arrangements made for those applicants/licensees who did not use the online service
- the number of Betting Shops in the county had remained static over the last few years and online provision was regulated by the Gambling Commission
- provided an update on the Welsh Government's White Paper on taxi and private hire licensing, with the closing date of 1 June 2023 on the initial consultation, and a further consultation on the detailed proposals expected in the autumn.

The Chair and members thanked the PPBM for the informative report on the scope and comprehensive work of the Licensing Section, and to all those who had contributed to that process.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

8 LICENSING COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Licensing Officer submitted a report (previously circulated) on the priorities of the Licensing Section together with a revised forward work programme.

The priorities of the Licensing Section reflected the duty placed on the authority in relation to its responsibilities for the licensing function and the effective regulation, control and enforcement of licensees together with the authority's commitment to safer communities and the development of the economy. The scheduled review of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Statement of Policy had been postponed pending the outcome of the consultation on the recently published Welsh Government White Paper: Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) (Wales) Bill, and a revised work programme had been presented for consideration. [A member briefing on the White Paper had been arranged immediately following the meeting.]

Members noted the update and revised forward work programme. It was confirmed that member training would also be included in the forward work programme.

RESOLVED that –

- the contents of the report be noted, and*
- the revised forward work programme for 2023 as detailed in Appendix A to the report be approved.*

The meeting concluded at 10.20 am.