



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
LICENSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Held: TUESDAY, 9 JULY 2019 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Hunter (Chair)
Councillor Pickering (Vice Chair)
Councillor Singh Johal

Councillor Cank
Councillor Fonseca
Councillor Gee

Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Sangster
Councillor Thomas

* * * * *

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interest they may have in the business on the agenda.

There were no declarations.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

NOTED:

The membership of the Licensing and Public Safety Committee for the 2019-20 municipal year as follows:

Councillor Hunter (Chair)
Councillor Singh-Johal (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Pickering (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Cank
Councillor Fonseca
Councillor Gee
Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Sangster

Councillor Thomas
1 non-group place

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

NOTED:

The Terms of Reference for the Licensing & Public Safety Committee.

5. DATES OF MEETINGS

NOTED:

The dates of the Committee meetings for the 2019-20 municipal year as follows:

Tuesday 9th July 2019
Tuesday 22nd October 2019
Tuesday 11th February 2020
Tuesday 21st April 2020

All meetings to commence at 5.30pm

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

7. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

8. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were no questions, representations and statements of case received.

9. LICENSING SERVICE POSITION STATEMENT

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report providing an overview of each work area within the Licensing Service.

The Licensing Team Manager introduced the report which included background information to the Licensing Process, roles and responsibilities, a summary of the three Licensing Teams: Licensing Applications; Licensing Enforcement and the Vehicle Testing Station and details of any particular areas of note.

Members noted that the Licensing and Public Safety Committee were responsible for maintaining an overview of licensing matters, scrutinising processes and procedures, making recommendations and actions as a

consultee on licensing policy.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

10. TAXI STRATEGY - DRIVER LICENSING CONSULTATION

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report giving details of the proposed consultation regarding policies and procedures associated with the licensing of taxi drivers.

The Chief Licensing Officer introduced the report and reminded members that the Taxi Strategy had been approved by Deputy City Mayor Clair earlier in the year and the next step of the process was to begin public consultation with the first part concerning taxi drivers. Members were referred to a draft copy of the consultation document which included proposals for consideration and were invited to provide comments to be feedback to the executive.

Members were of the view that Child Sexual Exploitation awareness training should be a mandatory pre-licensing requirement in proposal 11.

Regarding proposal 1, it was suggested that the expression “as soon as reasonably practicable” should be more specific. Concern was also expressed about computer accessibility and the difficulties that some may have with that. It was explained that all new applicants had been required to apply online for a few years with no reports of that being an issue. It was accepted that the renewal process was less simple however the council was moving to digital by default but there would continue to be an offer of assistance to anyone that struggled with that. Existing drivers would also be written to about the consultation.

In relation to proposal 7, it was suggested the statement about English assessment pre-licensing requirements be rephrased to say, “applicants whose language is not English as their first language” rather than refer to “all new applicants who were born outside the UK”. Members also questioned the equality implications of the English assessment and were informed that the English assessment had been introduced following a series of complaints primarily from customers, but also from councillors and officers, who had encountered difficulties with drivers that spoke little or no English. The proposal was to obtain further advice on equalities and consider whether there was a more appropriate way of screening people to ensure a sufficient level of communication ability with customers.

Members also suggested that once a provider was approved to conduct English Assessments there should be regular checks or audits against providers to ensure they were carrying out those assessments properly and verifying identities of those being tested.

Members noted that for proposal 3 and 6, the intention would be to contract a medical services provider and English assessment provider following a

thorough procurement process based on whoever was able and willing to provide such a service. In relation to proposal 3 concern was expressed regarding the procurement of private medical services as it was felt that the council should be seen to support the provision of NHS services. It was explained that this proposal had come about due to the constraints on GP practices in Leicester and the fact that a number of those were now unable to provide this service.

DBS checks would be portable under the DBS update service at proposal 4.

Members raised concerns that there was a gap in the system around convictions and people were potentially being put at risk when a driver's licence was revoked by one authority and a new licence granted by another authority. It was explained this was an issue across the country since the government had deregulated taxi licensing. Although all authorities carry out a DBS check, individual authorities might take a different view of the seriousness or relevance of any convictions. It was perfectly legitimate for a driver to be licensed by an authority and to be driving in another area, but local authority enforcement officers were not able to stop drivers or conduct vehicle checks if they were licensed by another licensing authority.

In relation to Proposal 10 it was queried why there was a need for someone to have both a competent understanding of the major areas of Leicester and sat-nav as over time a driver could become more competent. It was clarified that the proposals were for a new knowledge test to cover more than just street names and to include a general knowledge of the city, landmark sites and key features that a sat-nav would not be able to give.

Concern was expressed regarding proposal 15 that a person coming to Leicester as a refugee would not be able to meet the criteria to provide a continuous 5-year address history or produce a certificate of good conduct and that anyone unable to do that would have their application considered at the discretion of a Team Manager. In contrast the view was expressed that the authority's role was to protect the public and maintain high standards and where an applicant's suitability could not be confirmed a licence should be refused.

The legal officer commented that proposal 2 should be amended to read "referring to" the IoL guidance rather than "following".

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report and draft consultation paper be noted,
2. That the comments of the committee be fed back to the executive member.

11. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 6.24 pm