



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
LICENSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Held: TUESDAY, 30 APRIL 2024 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Singh Johal (Chair)
(Vice Chair)

Councillor Adatia
Councillor Cank
Councillor Karavadra

Councillor Chauhan
Councillor Joshi
Councillor Kitterick

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Byrne.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Kitterick declared he was friends with a manager of a local gambling premises and left the meeting before this item was heard.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations and statements of case had been submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures.

6. TAXI VEHICLE AGE POLICY - RESULT OF CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS

The Chair announced that due to the large number of members of the public in attendance to hear the finding of the Taxi Vehicle Age Policy Consultation, this item would be taken first on the agenda.

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report to update the Committee on the findings from the consultation that had taken place between 15th January 2024 and 24th February 2024.

The Licensing Manager (Policy and Applications) presented the report. It was noted that:

- 1311 responses had been received via the online consultation portal, however 595 were discounted as there had been multiple responses from the same respondents.
- In addition responses had also been received directly from the Guide Dogs Charity and Leicester City Council Transportation Team.
- Comments noted in the responses relating to increasing the age of for new vehicles, many respondents commented that buying a new car is too expensive and that the cost-of-living crisis was impacting their livelihood.
- Comments were also made about licences being issued by the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) and the impact that this was having on the taxi trade in Leicester. CWC has a more relaxed age policy allowing vehicles up to the age of 12 to be licensed with no restriction on entry age.
- Hackney Carriage respondents stated that the cost of buying a newer vehicle suitable to be a Hackney Carriage was prohibitive, making it impossible to afford.
- Although the vast majority of respondents had asked for the upper age for licensed vehicles to be increased to 15 years, the comments did not necessarily reflect this. Respondents had requested the same age as Wolverhampton 14 years. However this age was incorrect as it was currently 12 years. Some respondents referred to keeping the age limit the same as the current policy or only until the age of 12, which was the temporary policy in place at the moment.
- Private Hire Vehicles showed a fairly even spread across the age range, with an average of 5 years. This meant that the impact of a change in age policy would not be immediate. If the entry age for new vehicles is increased then this would benefit licence holders wishing to replace their existing vehicle, for example due to an accident or mechanical issue.

- Hackney Carriages tended to be older, with a higher proportion aged 9 years or more. Any increase in the upper age limit for vehicles to remain licensed would have an immediate impact on the Hackney Carriage fleet. A change to the entry age of vehicles should enable those who do need a replacement vehicle to source a vehicle more easily.
- Vehicles that were over the age of 11 that have been relicensed under the temporary policy had been required to undergo an additional inspection at the Vehicle Testing Station, so that they are tested every 4 months instead of every 6 months.

Benchmarking work had been completed with a number of local authorities who had reviewed their vehicle age policies in light of the guidance but also due to the impact that cross border hiring had on their licence holders. The aim being to retain their licensed drivers and vehicles and maintain control over the quality and safety of the vehicles that are working in their areas.

The Legal Advisor to the Committee gave advice on their options available and clarified that their decision is to give comment on the proposed options and the final decision would fall with the Deputy City Mayor, for Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods.

The Chair led on the Member discussions and discussed the appendices as a group. The Chair stated he would agree in line with the consultations findings and support what the Council has recommended.

Members comments:

- Members showed concern that if restrictions were imposed, it could encourage drivers to obtain licenses through other Councils.
- Newer vehicles had better emissions and general safety.
- The economics aren't currently available at the moment for more vehicles to be electric.
- More work needs to be done with nearby authorities, as Leicester Drivers are losing out on work from other licensed drivers.
- Safety was the paramount concern in Leicester, Wolverhampton are the competition and Leicester's standards are much higher and safer.
- Evidence of MOTs for older vehicles should be every 4 months based on the data provided.
- Drivers engaged with Leicester City Council a year ago, surrounding cities license saloon vehicles as Hackney Carriages. Data needs to be compared to nearby cities such as Nottingham, Derby, Coventry and Wolverhampton.

Moved by Councillor Singh Johal, Seconded by Councillor Pickering:

That the Licensing and Public Safety Committee recommend:

- A vehicle can be registered for the first time up to 9 years of age.
- Vehicles to have a 15 year age limit.

- From age 12 years, vehicles must be inspected 3 times per year.

7. NIGHT TIME ECONOMY - AREA ZONING

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services submitted a Report to update the Committee on Night Time Economy Area Zoning. Following enquiries from members of the business community to local councillors, there was a request to assess the available locality advice and mechanisms to support residents and businesses in their applications for licences or permits.

The Licensing Team Manager provided the Committee with a detailed introduction to the report, it was noted that:

- In 2023, Leicester City Council conducted a review of its licensing policy, incorporating an "Areas of Special Interest and Consultation" section. This section identifies specific parts of the authority's area that necessitate increased consultation by applicants with responsible authorities.
- The policy did not include explicit references to zoning, as it is not legislatively mandated or provided for within the Act.
- Leicester City Council's Local Plan outlines areas within the city suitable for nighttime economy premises, taking into account residential considerations.
- Leicester City Council presently does not have any Cumulative Impact Areas (CIAs) in effect. Previous CIAs were removed during the last review of the licensing policy due to insufficient data, evidence, and justification of their necessity.
- Despite the removal of Cumulative Impact Areas (CIAs), Leicester City Council implemented an interim measure known as the Areas of Special Interest and Consultation
- The areas of Leicester covered by this section of the policy include:
 - Granby Street, Belvoir Street & Market Street
 - High Street (from the junction of Carts Lane) & St Nicholas Place
 - Braunstone Gate & Narborough Road (up to the railway bridge)
 - Evington Road
 - Belgrave Road & Melton Road (up to the junction of Marfitt Street)

The following additional points were noted in Member Discussions:

- There was no real consistency or criteria on the process the Noise Team used to make decisions on the impact noise from a premises will produce. Clear consistency needs to be agreed on any areas that are measured for noise disruption.
- King Street had become more of a residential area and new bars in the area were opening until 3am, Members were concerned this would cause bigger issues in the long term.
- Evington Road is called an Area of Special Interest by Leicestershire Police. Each venue is looked at in its own merit, we need to take note

when issues are continuous on a particular road or area.

AGREED:

1. Members to note the report.
2. An update is brought to a future meeting on how noise is measured.

8. TAXI VEHICLE CONDITIONS - AMENDMENT

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report to update members and ask the Committee for an amendment in condition wording to ensure that vehicles that are suitable for the purpose of being used as a taxi are not restricted whilst maintaining safety standards.

The licensing Team Manager presented the report and outlined the details. It was explained that the purpose of the report was to ask the Committee for an amendment in condition wording to ensure that vehicles that are suitable for the purpose of being used as a taxi are not restricted whilst maintaining safety standards.

In 2023, a taxi strategy was implemented including the additions & amendments of conditions. One of these conditions related to the minimum light transmission on vehicles. Following discussions with officers and the trade, the condition relating to tinting conflicts with the manufacturers' standards and therefore is limiting the vehicles that can be licensed.

The proposed wording amendment is as follows:

The minimum light transmission through the windows shall be as follows:

- The front windscreen must allow 75% of light through;
- The front side windows must allow 70% of light through;
- The rear windows must be standard factory fitted, installed by the car manufacturer at the time the vehicle was built. After market or retro fitted tints will not be allowed.

Any replacement rear window must replicate the same visible light transmission as the original standard factory fitted.

AGREED:

1. Members noted the report.
2. Members accepted the proposed amendments to the Taxi Vehicle Conditions wording.

9. STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a draft Statement of Gambling Policy for Members of the Committee to review.

The Licensing Team Manager (Policy and Applications) presented the report

and outlined the details of the Consultation. The Statement of Gambling Policy would include a new section with findings from the Public Health Team. The revised Statement of Gambling Policy must be published 4 weeks before the current policy runs out in January 2025.

AGREED:

1. Members note the draft copy of the Statement of Gambling Policy.
2. The updated policy will return to the next Licensing and Public Safety Committee.

10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.46pm.