

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

MONDAY 23RD MARCH 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C. J. Spencer (Chairman), M. T. Buxton, S. J. Dudley, J. M. L. A. Griffiths, P. A. Harrison, B. Lewis, C. R. Scurrall (substituting for Councillor K. A. Grant-Pearce), R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon and L. J. Turner

Officers: Mrs V. Brown, Mr D. Etheridge and Ms R. Cole

34/14 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. A. Grant-Pearce and H. J. Jones.

35/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

36/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 12th January 2015 were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 12th January 2015 be approved as a correct record.

Councillor R. J. Shannon requested whether he could raise an item on Worcester Road Taxi Rank under item 6 of the Agenda.

The Chairman responded that she did not consider that the matter constituted an urgent item, but that following the close of the meeting, officers would be able to give further information and any Member who wished to stay to hear the update was welcome to do so.

37/14 **APPROVAL OF CONSULTATION ON AMENDMENTS TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICIES**

The Committee considered a report which set out the results of informal consultation with Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers on possible

changes to the Council's current policies and procedures in respect of the Licensing of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles.

The Senior Licensing Practitioner, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) reminded Members that they had previously considered a report from the Chairman of the Bromsgrove Taxi Association which raised a number of issues and proposed a number of changes to existing policies. The decision had been taken in November 2014 by the Licensing Committee to consult informally and enable discussion by way of trade forums before bringing these proposals and a draft consultation Document back to this Committee for comment .

The 2 trade forums held in February and March 2015 had been reasonably well supported with a total of 35 drivers attending. The discussion at the forums had focussed on the suggested changes to Policy and the general responses had been summarised in Appendix 1 to the report.

Members noted that in general existing licence holders had expressed concerns in respect of the changes which would have an adverse impact upon them financially and felt that this was only to be expected.

The Senior Licensing Practitioner confirmed that the next step, if Members wished to proceed with the process, was for a formal written consultation to be undertaken on the proposed amendments to policies and procedures. All existing Licence Holders and interested groups would be consulted. Therefore a wider range of views would be presented to the Committee prior to any decisions on changes to policies.

It was reported that consultation would take place over a period of at least 12 weeks and would include further open forums as well as the written consultation. It was important that any changes proposed were fully supported by evidence gathered at the consultation stage in case of any future challenge.

It was recognised that the Deregulation Bill which was going through Parliament contained 2 clauses relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing but it was not felt that the proposals being considered by this Council would be materially affected by Clauses in the Deregulation Bill.

It was felt would be useful to the public to explain more fully within the documentation the meaning of the term "grandfather rights" and officers undertook to clarify this as appropriate.

there was discussion on the importance of ensuring proper provision was made to enable people with disabilities, including those using wheelchairs, to use Hackney Carriages, Members acknowledged this was likely to be a significant issue within the consultation process;

The Senior Licensing Practitioner stressed the importance of involving all relevant parties in the consultation process and requested Members to notify himself of any suggested bodies and organisations whom members felt should

be involved. This would help to ensure there was a sound evidence base to support any changes to the policies which were eventually proposed. It was likely that a report on the outcome of the consultations would be submitted to The Committee in September 2015.

RESOLVED that Worcester Regulatory Services be requested to undertake formal consultation on the proposed changes to the Council's existing policies and procedures relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing , set out in the draft consultation document attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

38/14

STREET AMENITY POLICY - OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

The Committee considered a report from the Bromsgrove Town Centre Regeneration Programme Manager on the feedback received following consultation on the draft Street Amenity Policy which had been approved at the previous meeting of the Committee on 12th January 2015. The consultation had included the levels of fees proposed.

It was reported that 7 responses had been received to the consultation and that these had generally been in support of the Policy. A small number of changes to the Policy had been made by officers as a result of the feedback from the consultation and these were set out or referred to in sections 3.14 and 3.15 of the report.

Members felt that the introduction of the Policy would result in an improvement to the appearance of the High Street.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the responses received during the consultation period be noted;
- (b) that the draft Street Amenity Policy as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved and the Policy introduced with effect from 1st May 2015;
- (c) that it be recommended to the Cabinet that the fees set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report be adopted and added to the Fees and Charges Schedule as follows:
 - Street Amenity Policy (First Application) - £200
 - Street Amenity Policy (Annual Renewal) - £55
- (d) that it be recommended to Council that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to update the Scheme of Delegations to make provision for the officer decisions required under Section 115 of the Highways Act 1980 as set out in the report, together with the amendment of the terms of reference for the Licensing Committee to enable the Committee to determine Street Amenity Consents.

The meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.

Chairman