

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the LICENSING AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 7 February 2018.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors J E Corley, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, L George, Mrs S A Giles, J M Palmer, Mrs J Tavener, R G Tuplin and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B E Boddington and Mrs S Conboy.

23. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Committee held on 20th September 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

25. CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Community (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee were invited to contribute to the proposed terms of a Corporate Enforcement Policy for the District Council. The Policy would apply to regulatory services within the Community and Development Divisions of the Council and was intended to provide a greater degree of transparency in the Council's approach to breaches of regulatory control.

Attention was drawn to the appendices to the report which set out a proposed policy statement, the aims and guiding principles and the operational guidance for the application of the policy. Attention was also drawn to the Matrix Model which set out the enforcement options / escalation options which would be available to deal with specific issues as they arose. It was intended that Officers would utilise the policy and matrix toolkit to ensure that suspected breaches are investigated and resolved in a prioritised and proportionate manner.

In reviewing the proposed policy, Members expressed their support for the sensible and practical approach which had been adopted and suggested that the enforcement matrix would be a useful tool which could be utilised by all Members to explain how the Council responds to enforcement activity.

In response to a question concerning the resourcing implications of the new policy, Members were advised that its introduction would

enable existing Officer resources to be focused on clear prioritised, timely and meaningful actions. Not only would it provide officers with a framework to set response targets, it would also provide a framework for customers on outcomes and timescales. Clarification was also provided as to those circumstances (outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report) where breaches may be tolerated due to there being little demonstrable harm to the public or the environment.

Having noted that the draft policy had been discussed by the Development Management Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment), Members were advised that the views of all Committees and Panels would be considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 8th February 2018. Whereupon and having noted that the policy would continue to evolve once it commenced operation, it was

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Enforcement Policy be endorsed with no amendments for consideration by the Cabinet and onward recommendation to Council.

26. MONITORING REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF THE FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLANS

With the assistance of a report by the Operational Manager (Business) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee received an update on progress against the delivery of work in the Council's Food Law Enforcement and Health and Safety Service Plans during the period 1st April to 31st December 2017.

In presenting progress against the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan, Member's attention was drawn to the comparison of recorded activity against predicted activity in each of the programmed work service areas. Members were advised that there were currently 170 outstanding programmed food hygiene inspections to category A-D premises required before the end of March 2018. This was as a result of a vacancy within the team and a risk based approach was being adopted to address this issue.. Whilst the alternative enforcement strategy was currently classified as amber this was not currently of concern as it related to low risk premises which will be picked up in the fourth quarter of the year.

In terms of the unplanned (reactive) work (Appendix 2 to the report), Members were advised that the number of complaints and service requests was below target and that there had been no requirement in the year to-date for food, water and environmental samples to be taken.

The Committee were advised that Primary Authority work continued to be undertaken with Cambridgeshire Catering Services and an update on the progress which was being made with the 'Better Business for All' initiative and the implementation of the 'Healthier Options programme' within the District was provided. It was reported that the Food Standards Agency is continuing to develop their new strategic plan for delivering food safety and standards in the UK.

With regards to the delivery of the Health and Safety Plan for 2017/18, Members were advised that all activities had a progress status of 'Green' or 'Amber'. Resources continued to be channelled into the investigation and research around the recent work place death reported at Hammerton zoo.

In reviewing the performance information within the report, the Committee discussed the number of outstanding inspections for category A-D premises. Member's attention was drawn to the numbers in each category which were set out in Figure 1 in the report, these included the number of new premises within the District which were yet to receive a rating. It was envisaged that all category A and B premises would have received inspections by the end of the financial year and that the majority of category C premises would also have been completed. The Committee were assured that there were plans to fill both the ongoing vacancy within the Business Team and a further vacancy which was expected imminently. It was hoped that this would improve targets and service delivery.

In terms of the effect that the ongoing vacancy had had on performance levels, Members acknowledged that it was difficult to establish or monitor the specific impact of this. However it was reported there had not been any increase in the numbers of complaints received by the service and current enforcement activity was currently low with businesses generally compliant, which was a good indication that standards were not falling.

Finally Members discussed the frequency with which monitoring reports were presented to Committee. Whilst it was recognised that should these only be prepared on an annual basis it may save officer time, having regard to the ongoing situation with vacancies within the team it was agreed that monitoring reports should continue to be presented the Licensing and Protection Committee on a quarterly basis at this stage.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that progress on the delivery of the two Service Plans for the period 1st April to 31st December 2017 be noted.

27. LICENSING AND PROTECTION SUB COMMITTEE

With the aid of a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee received and noted the details of 5 meetings of the Licensing and Protection Sub-Committee which had taken place between 16th October 2017 and 29th January 2018.

28. SUSPENSION AND REVOCATION OF PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND DRIVERS LICENCES UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

With the aid of a report by the Head of Community (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee noted the details of

actions which had been taken since the last meeting under the Head of Community's delegated authority.

29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting of the Licensing and Protection Committee would be held on Wednesday 7th March 2018 at 2pm.

Chairman