

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the LICENSING AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 19 June 2019

PRESENT: Councillor S J Criswell – Chairman.

Councillors B S Banks, Mrs M L Beuttell, J R Clarke, Ms A Diaz, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs S A Giles, Mrs P A Jordan, L W McGuire, Mrs P E Shrapnel and R J West.

APOLOGY An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor D J Mead.

5 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 13th March and 15th May 2019 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

6 MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

7 MONITORING REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF THE FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY 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 May 2019.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Appendices to the report which contained the detailed performance information relating to the delivery of the Plans and Members were pleased to note that progress against all performance targets was currently set at green.

With regards to the Food Law Enforcement Service Plan, the Committee were informed that work is progressing on the Primary Authority pilot to link businesses with a regulator who is able to deliver primary authority services. The Better Business for All partnership held a staff launch event in May 2019 to promote the programme which is part of the Government's national agenda to use positive regulation and business support services to boost business growth. In addition it was reported that the Food Standards Agency Register is now ready to roll out to local authorities and work was progressing on the development of National Inspection Strategies which will result in greater consistency for businesses in the inspection regime.

The Committee noted that Officers would continue to monitor the number of complaints and service requests, the numbers of which seem to be slightly higher than usual at this stage of the year.

In relation to Health and Safety, the Committee were advised that the Authority had submitted a bid to the Health & Safety Executive to hold a business event to explain the requirements for compliance and how this can be achieved by an in-house safety culture. As requested at the previous meeting, details of accidents reported and investigated over the last two months were also reported.

In reviewing the performance report and in response to a question regarding the recent issues being reported in the media regarding listeria linked to pre-packed sandwiches and salads, the Committee were advised that local hospitals had not been affected, although the source of the outbreak had now been identified and controlled.

Whereupon and having commended officers for the work which was being undertaken to communicate with local businesses on food safety and health and safety matters, it was

RESOLVED

that progress on the delivery of the Service Plans for the period 1st April to 31st May 2019 be noted.

8 LICENSING AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE - SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO LICENSING AND PROTECTION SUB COMMITTEE

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Community (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Committee considered a proposal to amend the current scheme of delegation from the Licensing and Protection Committee to officers.

The Scheme of Delegation had last been revised in July 2016 and following a lean review of the licensing team and the introduction of a new and more robust licensing policy and conditions, it was now proposed to amend the delegations such that decisions relating to taxi licensing could be taken more efficiently and effectively within the service.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the proposed changes to the scheme (as set in Appendix B to the report) and Members were assured that the Sub-Committee and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would still have a role to play in the new approach. It would also provide efficiency savings within the licensing team which could be utilised for further enforcement activity.

In considering the contents of the report, the Chairman welcomed the proposals as a positive step to ensure that the Council provides a safe and secure taxi-service and suggested that any decisions under delegated powers could continue to be reported to the Committee at their quarterly meetings.

Arising from the report, Member went on to discuss the testing regime for vehicles, the work which had been started on scrutinising vehicle insurance and whether there was any potential for the future use of organised 'spot checks'.

The Committee were also reassured that there were a number of mechanisms in place for members of the public to report specific issues with taxis and that Officers also actively scrutinise social media for this purpose. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the amended scheme of delegation from the Licensing and Protection Committee to Officers as set out in Appendix B to the report be approved; and
- b) that the Head of Community be authorised to delegate decisions to the Operational Manager and Licensing Manager where appropriate to expedite efficient decision making.

9 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) and a verbal update at the meeting, the Committee received and noted the details of 2 meetings of the Licensing and Protection Sub-Committee which had taken place between 24th April and 12th June 2019.

10 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. In so doing, the Committee were informed that 4 vehicles remained suspended at the time of the report.

Having commented on the number of suspensions of vehicle licences as a result of there being no proof of insurance cover, the Committee were advised that this was an increasing problem nationally owing to the ability of operators to change insurance details quickly electronically. Members agreed that a clear message should be sent to the trade that this would not be tolerated, particularly as it was contrary to the District Council's Licensing Policy. The Licensing Manager undertook to raise the issue further at a forthcoming meeting that the Institute of Licensing with the Department for Transport and the Local Government Association.

Chairman