

At a meeting of the REGULATORY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 2nd OCTOBER, 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Blackburn in the Chair

Councillors Elliott, Fletcher, I. Galbraith, P. Gibson, Howe, Lawson, Scaplehorn, Turner and M. Turton.

Declarations of Interest

Item 7 – Driver A

Councillor I. Galbraith declared that he knew this driver and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the matter.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Atkinson, Emerson, Heron and Johnston

**Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 4th September, 2017
Part I**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 4th September, 2017 Part I (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Survey into Hackney Carriage Demand

The Executive Director of Economy and Place submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of the findings of a survey undertaken by an independent consultancy company in relation to the Council's current policy of restricting the number of hackney carriage licences issued. Members were being asked to give consideration to the retention of the current policy in relation to quantity control of hackney carriage licences.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Richard Reading, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager, introduced the report and the Chairman welcomed Mr McDonald to the meeting to present the findings of the survey.

Councillor P. Gibson expressed surprise that the Council's Highways department and Together For Children (TFC) had not responded; especially considering that TFC were major users of taxis. Mr McDonald stated that all of the consultees had been chased for a response however no response had been received from some; it was often the case that people did not respond when the service was working without issues. Mr Wotherspoon added that the majority of taxis used by TFC were private hire vehicles which were working on a contract so it was possible that TFC did not consider hackney carriage licensing to be a priority.

Councillor Turner stated that the report referred to observation of ranks within Hetton however she was not aware of any rank in Hetton. Mr Reading advised that there was a rank by the swimming pool however the markings had been removed when the Highways department had been doing works; he would speak to the Highways department to ensure that the markings were repainted. Mr McDonald commented that the survey had focused on the busiest locations as these were where there was likely to be unmet demand.

Councillor Howe referred to the comments in the report regarding drivers who spoke poor English. He asked whether steps should be taken to ensure that drivers were able to be understood by passengers. Mr Reading advised that some councils had introduced testing of English skills; the knowledge test required of all Sunderland drivers did require a knowledge of English to be completed.

Councillor Howe then expressed concerns that when drivers were from other countries it was not always possible to perform a full background check of any criminal record they may have in their home country. Mr Reading advised that any drivers from EU countries were required to provide evidence that they did not have a criminal record; there was a policy for non-EU drivers being developed and this would be brought to the Committee.

Councillor Lawson expressed concerns over the concerns raised in the report around professionalism of drivers. Taxis were part of the public transport system and the drivers of other parts of the system such as buses were expected to be professional however this was not always achieved with taxi drivers; she asked whether anything could be done to improve professional standards. Mr Reading stated that there was an NVQ course for taxi drivers however he was not aware of anyone in the region who offered this course.

Councillor I. Galbraith commented that it was not always possible to see drivers' ID badges when sat in the back of a vehicle. Mr Reading stated that drivers were required to wear their badge at all times however some drivers would hang their badge off the rear view mirror; this did not comply with the requirement to wear the badge but did make it easier to see for rear seat passengers.

The Chairman commented that the report referred to a Premier Inn in Hetton however he was not aware of such a place. He also stated that Grand Central and Nexus had not been consulted nor had any of the care homes in Hetton. There were 75 elected Members on the Council and he felt that they should have been consulted as well.

Councillor P. Gibson then moved that the findings of the survey be accepted and that the policy be retained with no change to the maximum number of hackney carriages. With all Members being in agreement it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the current policy in relation to the quantity control of hackney carriages be retained.

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Application for Consent to Trade in a Designated Area – East Side of Hay Street, 18.7m South of its Junction with Brooke Street, Sunderland

The Executive Director of Economy and Place submitted a report (copy circulated) in respect of an application for street trading consent for a site on Hay Street which had been submitted by Mrs Celia Bernadette Smith.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Reading introduced the report and advised that Mrs Smith was not in attendance. The consent requested was to trade on matchdays only and the site had previously been granted consent.

Members discussed the application and Councillor P. Gibson, seconded by Councillor Elliott, moved that the application be approved. With all Members being in agreement it was:-

3. RESOLVED that Mrs Smith be granted street trading consent in respect of a site located on the East Side of Hay Street, 18.7m South of its Junction with Brooke Street, Sunderland, on matchdays only, for a period three hours before and one hour after the match.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

4. RESOLVED that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered likely to include the disclosure of exempt information relating to an individual and the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Authority holding that information). (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 3).

(Signed) J. BLACKBURN,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to members of the public.

Additional minutes in respect of further items are included in Part II.