

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Licensing Committee held in the Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6PH on Monday, 22nd April, 2024 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Sandra Campbell-Wardman (Chairman)
Councillor Neil Jones (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Richard Avison, Stephen Evans, Darren Hobson,
George Horton, Andrew Leonard, Carl Macey and Terry Taylor.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Adrian Twiddy	- Principal Licensing Officer
Kim Robertson	- Legal Advisor
Lynda Eastwood	- Democratic Services Officer
Laura Allen	- Democratic Services Officer

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Graham Cullen.

50. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY):

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to disclose any relevant interests. The following interests were disclosed:

- Councillor Carl Macey asked it be noted that he was a personal licence holder.
- Councillor Andrew Leonard asked it be noted that he was a Magistrate.
- Councillors Darren Hobson and George Horton asked it be noted that they knew Neil Warne of Wolds Taxis, Minute number 54 refers.
- Councillor Terry Taylor asked it be noted that he was a Member of Spilsby Town Council, Minute number 55 refers.

51. MINUTES:

The Open and Exempt Minutes of the General Licensing Committee Meeting held on 11 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

52. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING: BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

An open report was submitted by the Group Manager Public Protection which updated the Committee on the changes to the Department for Transport's Best Practice Licensing Guidance.

On 17 November 2023 the Department for Transport (DfT) issued updated Best Practice Guidance for Local Authorities on the subject of hackney carriage (taxi) and private hire vehicle licensing. The Report advised the Committee on the new guidance document and indicated the changes that had been made by the DfT.

The Licensing team were recommending that the Committee:

- Note the updated Department for Transport (DfT) Best Practice Guidance.
- Amend the Council's current hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licensing policy in line with the recommendations set out in **Appendix B** of the Report.
- Instruct Officers to provide any further reports to the Committee where aspects of the guidance may necessitate a further review of local licensing practices.

The Principal Licensing Officer set out the background to the report and updated Members on the Best Practice Guidance, pages 2 to 30 of the report refer. Members were further referred to Appendix A and the Principal Licensing Officer highlighted the three specific items in the guidance which needed to be reviewed as a matter of urgency. Those items were:

Item 8.14 Carrying Children - page 13 of the report refers.

Following which, it was Proposed and Seconded for the guidance to remain as it was.

Item 8.18 Emergency Equipment - page 14 of the report refers.

A Member queried whether there was anything in the policy with regards to what action a driver should take if their taxi caught fire. The Principal Licensing Officer responded that there was nothing in the policy or Best Practice Guidance that referred to this.

A Member commented that it was useful to have a fire extinguisher in a taxi to be used in an emergency and highlighted that fire extinguisher training would not be required as the instructions were on the side of the fire extinguisher.

A Member further suggested that it should be mandatory, and not the driver's choice as to whether they carried a fire extinguisher.

The Principal Licensing Officer informed Members that he was aware that most taxi drivers' preference was to stop carrying a fire extinguisher and that was also the recommendation of other Councils.

Following which, it was Proposed and Seconded to amend the policy to leave it to the drivers' preference if they wished to carry a fire extinguisher.

Item 8.8 Tinted Windows - page 12 of the report refers.

A Member queried whether there had been any reaction from the public with regards to this and whether feedback had been received whether they felt their safety had been compromised. The Principal Licensing Officer responded that they had not received any complaints with regards to heavily tinted windows in private hire vehicles.

The Principal Licensing Officer confirmed that the ban on mirror glass/heavily tinted glass would remain and if Committee were minded to amend the guidance, it would be the second time the tint level would have been decreased.

A Member queried whether the 30% tint percentage was in line with production vehicles. The Principal Licensing Officer responded that the tint percentage must be correct otherwise the vehicle would be illegal.

The Principal Licensing Officer advised Members that the strict rules on tinted windows related to the front passenger windows, however the policy related to rear windows only.

Following which, it was Proposed and Seconded to amend the policy in line with officer recommendation.

The Principal Licensing Officer also advised Members that further items in the Best Practice Guidance would need to be looked at in the future, including disability awareness training, driver proficiency, vehicle condition check and the frequency of vehicle tests.

A discussion ensued with regards to first aid kits and carbon emissions reduction. The Principal Licensing Officer advised Members that the Climate Team had written to all taxi proprietors with regards to reducing their carbon emission footprint.

Following which, it was

RESOLVED

- That the updated Department for Transport (DfT) Best Practice Guidance be noted.
- That the Council's current hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licensing policy in line with the recommendations set out in **Appendix B** of the Report be amended.
- That officers be instructed to provide any further reports to the Committee where aspects of the guidance may necessitate a further review of local licensing practices.

N.B. Councillor George Horton left the Meeting at 14:39 and returned at 14:41.

53. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS:

It was proposed and seconded that the public and press be excluded from the meeting.

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that, if they were present, there could be disclosed exempt information as defined at paragraphs 1, 2 and 7 of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act (as Amended).

54. APPLICATION FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE DRIVER LICENCES:

Adrian Twiddy, Principal Licensing Officer presented Members with an exempt report relating to an application for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle driver licences.

Following which, it was

RESOLVED

That the licence application be refused, as set out in the Exempt Minute.

55. APPLICATION FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE DRIVER LICENCES:

Adrian Twiddy, Principal Licensing Officer presented Members with an exempt report relating to an application for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle driver licences.

Following which, it was

RESOLVED

That the licence application be granted, as set out in the Exempt Minute.

The Meeting closed at 3.48pm.