

LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

6th March 2023

Present: Councillor Richard Udall in the Chair

**Councillors Barnes, Cockeram, Cronin,
Mrs L. Hodgson, Lawrance, Lewing, Mackay,
Mitchell, Norfolk and Stafford**

Officers: Lloyd Griffiths – Corporate Director
Operations, Homes and
Communities

**Niall McMenamin - Principal Officer,
Licensing, Worcestershire
Regulatory Services**

58 Declarations of Interest

None.

59 Public Representations

Ms Lesley Borthwick addressed the Committee, expressing dissatisfaction with inequalities between the taxi licensing regime for Wychavon District Council and Worcester City Council. Overall, Wychavon charged less for licensing both private hire and Hackney carriage vehicles, and had a less restrictive vehicle age policy. Ms Borthwick believed that this led to vehicles licensed in Wychavon coming to work in Worcester City, making it unfair for those who were working within Worcester's licensing regime, and leading to a loss of revenue for the Council.

The Chair noted Ms Borthwick's concerns about the disparity, and invited her and her colleagues to contribute their feedback to the fees and charges consultation exercise. It was hoped that progress could be made towards standardization of licensing regimes in the area in the near future.

Mr Sajad addressed the Committee regarding the need for traffic enforcement, particularly in New Street in the City Centre where private vehicles had been seen to park in the taxi rank. He shared his concerns about the affordability of electric vehicles and availability of charging points.

The Chair thanked Mr Sajad for his comments, pointing out that enforcement was being undertaken in the City and that during the last weekend alone over 40 penalty charges had been issued. It was suggested that Mr Sajad should attend future Taxi Forum meetings to discuss his concerns further.

60 Minutes

In response to issues raised regarding taxi rank misuse and loss of space, the Chair responded that enquiries should be made with the relevant officers/County Council Highways Team.

The minutes of the previous meeting incorrectly referred to taxi 'reinforcement' rather than 'enforcement' at point 56.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

61 Proposal to Review the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Age Policy

Officers presented a report with a proposal to review the policy with regard to the age of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles.

The report suggested that the existing 3 year age limit on standard vehicles be reviewed with a view to increasing the limit to 5 years. Officers proposed to undertake consultation on the change, with the Committee's agreement. It was hoped that if approved, the change may further support taxi drivers with the transition to electric vehicles. If the consultation was approved by Committee, the outcome would be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee in June.

Committee members commented that vehicle technology had moved on in recent years to such an extent that a two year difference in the age of a vehicle was unlikely to have a significant impact on its performance. Officers confirmed that the current twice-yearly vehicle testing regime would remain in place and would be unaffected by any of the proposals under discussion.

Committee members discussed the potential difficulty in striking a balance between trying to improve the City's air quality whilst supporting taxi drivers. The environmental impact of a new electric vehicle in terms of carbon footprint was thought to be greater than a well-maintained vehicle running on fossil fuel.

RESOLVED: That Committee:

- 1. Notes the contents of the report, and in particular the proposals to incentivise the transition to electric hackney carriage and private hire vehicles by amending the Council's current vehicle age policy.**
- 2. Approves the undertaking of an 8-week public consultation exercise, in respect of the following proposals to amend the Council's hackney carriage and private hire vehicle age policy:**
 - i. No upper or lower age limit restrictions are to apply in respect of 'all electric' new and replacement hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.**
 - ii. The current lower age limit for replacement hackney carriage vehicles to be amended from 3 years (currently) to 5 years (proposed).**

- 3. Notes that a further report will be presented to this Committee in June 2023 with the outcome of the public consultation exercise, in order for a final decision to be taken in respect of the proposals.**

62 Cumulative Impact Policy Review - Licensing Act 2003

Officers presented an information report regarding a review of the Council's Special Policy on Cumulative Impact which is kept under regular review, and is next due to be considered in July 2023.

The Policy was introduced by the Council following evidence presented by West Mercia Police demonstrating that at the time the City Centre of Worcester was being adversely affected by an increase in crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour due to the large number of licensed premises concentrated in the area.

The process of reviewing data from statutory authority partners had begun. It was anticipated that an assessment of the data and any ensuing proposal to revise the Policy would be brought before Committee members at the June 2023 meeting.

Committee members discussed the implications and effectiveness of the current policy. The Chair reminded Committee members that this was the first stage in a lengthy review process which would provide opportunity for further discussion and input throughout.

RESOLVED: That Committee:

- Notes the contents of the report and, that the Council's Special Policy on Cumulative Impact requires review ahead of July 2023**
- Notes that a report setting out a review of the Council's Special Policy on Cumulative Impact will be presented to the Committee in June 2023.**

63 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 19:00 to 20:05

Chair at the meeting on
19th June 2023