

# Public Document Pack

## REGULATORY AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

**26 MARCH 2024**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors Salter (Vice-Chair), Anketell, Ashton, Bragger, Checkland, Coe, L Ennis, Henshaw, Hill and Leung

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from councillors Brian Yeates (Chair) and Diane Evans.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were approved as a true record.

### **4 TAXI POLICY UPDATE**

James Johnson (Regulation & Enforcement Manager) provided an overview of the current policy on Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles.

Mr Johnson gave an overview, that back in December the committee approved a series of objectives to review as part of the renewal policy, with the objectives agreed on being the age of vehicles, electric vehicles, wheelchair accessible vehicles and hackney carriage fairs. The committee was keen for officers to engage with drivers for their views on a potential policy and what that would look like going forward. Officers confirmed that they had held a workshop for all taxi drivers to attend, who gave their requests: controls that could be put into place to increase reliance on Lichfield's licenced vehicles rather than vehicles licenced by other councils; points on window tint and how the current policy isn't always compatible with vehicles as they come out of the manufacture; and the last point being on MOT and compliance testing and how this could be better done in the future. Officers were pleased to say the workshop was very well attended and it being a regular meeting with the driver enabling them to give feedback on the enforcement activity that they have done since the previous meeting.

Members asked about the current age that a vehicle could be a taxi and how long it can carry on till. Officers confirmed that they require drivers to change vehicles more than other councils do. However, there are concerns on if the policy isn't adjusted in terms of age of vehicles to better meet other councils, Lichfield may lose drivers to those other councils. Members asked about the 5 years on the vehicles and whether this is too frequent or standard across councils. Officers discussed with the committee the pros and cons of having older vehicles, such as having them checked far more frequently but being able to keep the same vehicle for a longer period of time.

Members discussed their concern on tinted windows and that it is not always the safest option for members of the public. Officers noted this, however brought up the driver's concerns that some people pay for luxury taxis like executive airport runs etc. These cars come out of the manufacturers with the tints already on the windows.

Members asked about the consultation and how information is being disseminated. Mr Johnson confirmed there are 147 drivers within Lichfield all on email distribution lists, so for events they are all notified/informed and invited to attend. It was confirmed that union reps provide informal feedback from drivers. For future meetings officers are hoping to do face to face and online meetings as it is suspected more may attend an online meeting.

The committee discussed the difference between an MOT and a compliance test. It was confirmed the MOT looks at the vehicle condition itself and if it safe to run while a taxi compliance test looks at different areas, covering things like cleanliness and presentability.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles were discussed and the financial cost of them compared to other vehicles. It was stated that they are considerably more expensive than any other form, so for that reason the council is unable to change the fees that they charge for them. It was discussed whether the wheelchair accessible vehicles could taxi for longer due to the price and it being so expensive in the long run. Members asked about the number of wheelchair taxi vehicles that are currently licenced by the council which officers confirmed there are currently two. A threshold was discussed which would require operators to have a certain number of wheelchair accessible vehicles, if they have a certain number of other vehicles.

The committee discussed the law on assessing each driver to be fit and competent and carrying out DBS checks when transferring vulnerable people such as people affected by alcohol or other substances, as well as with people to and from hospital. Training is also required for each driver to undertake which is a face-to-face training on safeguarding.

**RESOLVED:** 2.1 Following consultation with taxi drivers, the committee approved the inclusion of additional objectives for the review: a review of potential levers to increase the use of local vehicles by operators, window tints and MOT and compliance tests.

2.2 The committee approved the revised timeline detailed at 3.4.

2.3 The committee approved the Assistant Director of Operations, Regulation and Enforcement to retain the ability to make minor variations to the policy in consultation with the Chair of the Regulatory and Licencing Committee.

## 5 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Discussed the work Program and upcoming reports that were being bought in June. The dates lined up ahead and bringing the proposed taxi policy as well as the food service delivery plan were discussed.

Officers gave an update on the three-year period food service delivery plan and the update of changing it to an annual plan with the reasons being in July they were notified by the food standards agency that they were going to be audited and given a matter of days to prepare for that. A report was received following that audit in December and as a result a number of changes has been made with the next food service delivery plan to be bought to the committee in June.

Members were extremely thankful for the officer's work in recruiting two more officers one in environmental health and one in housing enabling them to get closer to achieving there targets.

Although targets wont be met this year inspections are being rolled over and hopefully achieved next year.

Members discussed a suggested item of the private rental sector and the powers that the council have over this. It was agreed that a verbal or written update would be given at the next committee.

The committee discussed the polling places review and for an update to be given soon. Members asked about the time scale and officers confirmed that stations are kept under constant review but the difficulty with Parliamentary elections is not knowing when and as a lot of venues are already taking bookings it may fall on a day they are unavailable.

(The Meeting closed at Time Not Specified)

CHAIR

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