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REGULATORY AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

25 JULY 2024

PRESENT:

Councillors Evans (Chair), B Yeates (Vice-Chair), Ashton, Bragger, Checkland, L Ennis, Henshaw, Hill and Salter

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from councillors Coe, Leung and Anketell.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were signed and accepted as a true record.

4 PRESENTATION ON HOUSING STANDARDS ENFORCEMENT

The committee were given a verbal update on housing standards enforcement, it was stated that approximately 6 thousand people die from accidents at home with a further 2.7 million people requiring hospital treatment costing the NHS almost 50 billion pounds. Officers stated that the most common cause of the accidents is something LDC can tackle themselves including cold homes resulting in 5 thousand deaths a year, fires resulting in more than 300 deaths and between 1 and 6 million homes are estimated to suffer from damp and mould. In 2017 there were approximately 44 thousand residential properties in the district with 5 and a half thousand estimating to be privately rented, of those which were privately rented it was further estimated that 15% had category 1 hazards which is the most serious hazards in homes. In the last 3 years LDC have dealt with over 650 cases relating to property conditions which have been complaints mostly from tenants.

Councillors asked for the notes made to be sent over and thanked officers for the report, the committee asked for it to be put on the work program when another update is available.

The committee discussed homes with damp and how Bromford are dealing with the issues. Officers stated that Bromford have their own duties in relation to their tenants and it will be themselves who deal with complaints however when tenants reach a certain point they can then come to LDC for further help. The committee talked about the construction of homes and if there is a possibility to put more pressure on Bromford, it was stated that LDC do have powers over Bromford and there is a protocol where now only a few things come back in relation to housing conditions.

5 FOOD SAFETY DELIVERY PLAN

The committee received a report on food safety delivery plan updated from 2021-2024 to 2024-2025. It was stated that it is essential that the delivery of the food safety enforcement is undertaken and approved in compliance with government regulations.

The committee asked about the backlog and how long it will take to come down to reasonable levels, officers confirmed that the higher risk categories are always dealt with first with an intention to achieve that by the end of September start of October which is currently on track, as for category E which is the lowest risk is an ongoing requirement that will be caught up with and realistically extend beyond 2025 due to resources and prioritisation.

RESOLVED: Approved

6 DOG CONTROL PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER

Members received a report on Dog Control with a brief look at the history as in 1996 there was the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act which gave enforcement powers specifically for dog fouling. In 2005 the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act introduced Dog Control Orders which created a range of specific dog related offences and which lasted indefinitely once created. In 2014 the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act made it possible to create a Public Space Protection Order covering, amongst other things, dog related offences, but these Orders only last up to three years. This Public Space Protection Order is to follow on from the previous one and covers dog fouling, excluding dogs from children's play areas, a requirement for individuals to carry a waste bag to pick up dog waste and a requirement to put their dog on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer. It was stated that this last one was primarily in order for officers to deal with cases and prevent dogs hindering discussions with the offender.

Members discussed the importance of this Order and discussed issues of dogs being on long leads of up to 5m, they wanted to emphasize it's not about them being put on a lead it's also about them being under control in which officers agreed and stated that the Public Space Protection Order specifies a maximum of two metres when told to do so.

The committee asked about the amount of enforcement there has been over the past three years officers confirmed there had been one prosecution of a gentleman who previously had three offences.

Members asked about the enclosed play areas, and Stychbrook park in particular, enquiring that when it changes shape, has a leisure centre built on it or is in a slightly different position whether officers could move the PSPO. This was agreed and it was advised that another Order can be created at any point .

Members and officers had a discussion on dog wardens stating there are two working part time for LDC who are ex police officers currently targeting certain areas such as fouling and using intelligent cards to sign post residents to get in touch with a description of the owner as well as the dog if they have left dog fouling behind and this assists in directing patrols.

RESOLVED: Approved

7 TAXI POLICY UPDATE

The committee received an update on the taxi policy and the main changes in the policy. Officers explained that the policy is about 50% shorter than the old policy and hopefully reads easier. One main change to the policy is the application process as currently applications are put in for licenses and many of the items are missing which uses a considerable amount of officer's time to chase up such as DBS checks, so it is proposed to only accept applications once all additional documents are presented. Officers are also proposing that operators must tell clients when making a booking if their driver or vehicle is licenced by another council other than Lichfield hopefully encouraging operators to put greater reliance on LDC's licensed drivers. The final major change officers wish to make to the taxi policy is something Lichfield's

licenced drivers have requested themselves which is the age of their vehicles. The current problem with the policy is that the age of vehicles allowed by LDC has forced taxi drivers to move to other councils where their vehicle will last longer. Lichfield is proposing to licence older vehicles which will hopefully encourage drivers to stay licensed by LDC and attract drivers back to Lichfield and licence the vehicle from day one. As for wheelchair accessible vehicles there are current two licensed by Lichfield and hopefully by allowing adapted vehicles to be licensed longer will encourage greater use. The last change around enforcement is giving officers the right to suspend taxi drivers at the roadside and take their plates of the vehicle, by doing this officers aren't leaving an unsafe driver or vehicle on road until a hearing comes around.

Members asked about the possibility of extending EV and hybrid vehicles in which officers confirmed electric vehicles are licenced forever as long as the vehicle is safe upon inspections every six months.

Members and officers discussed the suspension enforcements given to private hire vehicle too close to taxi stands.

Members asked if communication with the public is possible asking to use a local taxi where possible which officers confirmed they are already looking to do so as well as listing wheelchair accessible vehicles and contact details on their website.

Members asked for all roadside suspensions to be reported back to the committee and was agreed to have it as a standing agenda item, so each committee meeting has a report of action taken since the previous committee.

RESOLVED: Approved

8 GAMBLING POLICY UPDATE

The committee received a report on the 3 year gambling policy which is due for renewal.

RESOLVED: Approved

9 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee discussed the work program and the items on the agenda for the next meeting on 30th September with the polling places review due. Officers confirmed they are proposing to bring a draft enforcement policy to the committee in December as well as a report on street trading.

(The Meeting closed at 7.01 pm)

CHAIR

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