

MINUTES OF: LICENSING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 10th March 2015

**Present: Councillor Gill (in the Chair)
Councillors Ashworth, Cheetham, Crawforth, De Souza,
Eaton, Farrington, Hughes (in part), Oakes and Shipley**

**In Attendance: Tracy Brzozowski, Licensing and Enforcement Manager
Clare Birtwistle, Legal Services Manager
Jenni Cook, Committee Officer**

**Also Present: Councillor Haworth
1 member of the public
1 member of the press**

BUSINESS MATTERS

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received on behalf of Councillor Neal, who has chairing another meeting that evening and Councillor Wilkinson (Councillor Oakes substituting).

2. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on the 11th March 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the following Driver Sub-Committees be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record:-

- a) 26th March 2014
- b) 17th April 2014
- c) 19th June 2014
- d) 3rd July 2014
- e) 16th July 2014
- f) 28th July 2014
- g) 20th August 2014
- h) 16th September 2014
- i) 22nd October 2014
- j) 12th November 2014
- k) 24th November 2014
- l) 2nd December 2014
- m) 21st January 2015
- n) 12th February 2015

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

6. CONSULTATION ITEM – BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

- 6.1 The Licensing and Enforcement Manager introduced a presentation which outlined proposals to introduce a Basic Skills Assessment and Taxi Policy Awareness Assessment for hackney carriage and private hire drivers. It was noted that the Council had not received any complaints regarding the language skills of taxi drivers, however, other Councils had and she noted that Licensing Unit staff were finding it increasingly difficult to have conversations with applicants. For example it was noted that a simple telephone call to take a payment could take between 2-15 minutes.
- 6.2 The Licensing and Enforcement Manager outlined the Basic Skills Assessment which would take the form of a simple conversation with an assessor, passenger related questions, a numeracy test and a written test based on the taxi fare card.
- 6.3 A Taxi Policy Awareness assessment was also proposed which would test applicants' awareness of the Council's policy, including questions on reporting of accidents, summons, convictions and sale of vehicles.
- 6.4 Mr David Lawrie spoke on the item and the Chair allowed him to participate in the rest of the discussion.
- 6.4 Discussion took place on the item, summarised below:
- Introduction of a Knowledge Test – the Licensing and Enforcement Manager and Mr Lawrie explained why this was not possible in Rossendale, due to its geographical location and lack of alternative routes.
 - Concerns were expressed regarding the number of applicants attending the Driver Sub-Committees who were unable to speak English and complete their own application forms.
 - The support of the taxi trade with regards to the Basic Skills Assessment and Taxi Policy Awareness Assessment was noted.
 - It was estimated that there were approximately 1200 drivers who had Rossendale plates but did not drive in the area. Members expressed their concerns regarding this.
 - It was clarified that legislation required drivers to report accidents which resulted in a detrimental appearance to their vehicle within 72 hours, regardless of private or taxi use.
 - Concerns were expressed regarding the number of drivers who may not know the Rossendale area and who were not working within the Rossendale area.
 - The Licensing and Enforcement Manager clarified that the assessments would be for new applicants, however it was intended that the Sub-Committee would be able to apply the assessments as a sanction to current drivers if appropriate.
 - It was clarified that there were over 2000 vehicles registered on Rossendale plates, however these could have more than one driver.

- Mr Lawrie clarified the position regarding drivers giving quotes for fares to passengers.

Resolved:

1. The Licensing Committee requested that the Licensing and Enforcement Manager begins the process of establishing a Basic Skills Assessment and Taxi Policy Awareness Assessment for hackney carriage and private hire drivers.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.20pm

CHAIR: _____