

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5 December 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Flavell (Chair); Councillors Culbard, Duffy, Haque and T Eales

OFFICERS: Louise Faulkner (Licensing Team Leader)
Ian Ellis (Senior Licensing Enforcement Officer)
Eleanor Flannery (Licensing Enforcement Officer)
Jason Toyne (Licensing Enforcement Officer)
James Chadwick (Senior Litigation Solicitor)
Ed Bostock (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beardsworth and Walker.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2017 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Gary Brickwood addressed the Committee and asked that the meeting be adjourned due to aggravation to drivers having to get rid of their cars.

Members were informed that adjournment would be a matter for consideration at the end of the meeting.

Kevin Willsher addressed the Committee and commented that the cap on Hackney carriages proved that drivers were struggling and questioned why those findings were not part of the report. He noted that there were only 2 options for the Committee to take and stated that the conditions imposed on drivers would be very harsh. Mr Willsher commented that Hackney carriage drivers had been made scapegoats for Northampton's air quality issues.

In response to questions, Mr Willsher stated that drivers would need longer to implement changes.

Simon Willsher addressed the Committee and commented that due to the restrictions on timeframes within the proposal, many drivers would have to sell their vehicles before they had finished paying for them. He further commented that some drivers would not be able to get finance for new vehicles. He stated that the Council seemed to be removing peoples' options to choose the vehicles that they drove.

In response to questions, Mr Willsher commented that there was a lack of infrastructure for low emission and electric vehicles and that the changes would happen too fast as they stood.

Steve Evans addressed the Committee and commented that to have a Euro 6 vehicle by January 2018, many drivers would need to get car finance. He proposed extending the time limit from 2021 to 2028 for drivers to upgrade their cars to make it less financially strenuous on them.

Mohamed Conteh addressed the Committee and commented that should the proposal go through, the impact would be too great for many drivers. He urged the Committee to find a way to extend the time period for drivers' ease.

Abu Basar addressed the Committee and voiced his concern regarding the cost of an E6 vehicle over 6 or 7 years. He stated that Private Hire drivers' flagging and a general decrease in the amount of work available meant it was harder for a Hackney Carriage driver to make a living.

In response to questions, Mr Basar informed the Committee that school runs were often taken by Private Hire drivers or the County Council's school transport services as their prices were more competitive.

Steve Ward addressed the Committee and commented that Phase 3 seemed unclear. He stated that as the report contained proposals, these would be likely to change. He commented that the figures referred to in paragraph 3.24 of the report were taken from the EQUA website they were likely to be very optimistic. Mr Ward stated that an age restriction on vehicles would be better and asked that this be looked into, rather than emissions.

Shahid Basir addressed the Committee and commented that most of the drivers shared the same concern. He stated that many drivers would be affected by the proposals and that buying new vehicles in such a small space of time would not be viable for most.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Haque declared an interest in item 4 by virtue of having previously held a Combined Driver's licence and knowing some of the drivers.

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

6. TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE EMISSIONS POLICY

The Licensing Team Leader submitted a report and elaborated thereon. Members were asked to consider the Private Hire & Taxi Vehicle Emissions Policy to improve air quality and reduce the health impact for residents and visitors to Northampton, following consultation in respect of vehicle emissions that took place between 24th November 2016 and 16th February 2017. She explained that additional discussions had taken place with the trade to discuss drivers' adaptability regarding new vehicles and stated that the Council were working with Northamptonshire County Council to improve infrastructure by providing charging points in the town; it was noted that NCC had already started work on this.

In response to questions, the Committee heard that Government funding was available to help drivers purchase suitable vehicles. It was anticipated that new technologies would demonstrate fuel efficiencies.

Andrew Whittles, of Low Emission Strategies Ltd., explained to the Committee that 1 in 20 deaths in Northampton were caused by air pollution. He reported that the Government were setting standards for local authorities to adhere to, and that bus services were also being asked to reduce their emissions. Mr Whittles explained that the policy would require all vehicles to be Euro 6 by 2020 and ULEV by 2030. He reported that Northampton Borough Council were 1 of 15 local authorities that were eligible for funding from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV); 8 authorities were selected, however, it was still possible for

NBC to apply for a second round of funding in 2018. Mr Whittles advised that fines could be passed onto local authorities if emissions targets were not met.

In response to questions, it was noted that the Hackney Association sent a consultation response on behalf of all Hackney Carriage drivers. Members were informed that funding was available through OLEV for 75% of the cost for a home charging point for electric vehicles as well as a £3,500 grant for disabled access vehicles.

It was explained that many vehicles purchased in the last year were high-polluting. It was anticipated that should a decision be put back another year, there would be no change in the situation.

A proposal was made to defer the item until such a time as an amended policy could be considered. This was unanimously agreed by Members.

RESOLVED:

That the item be deferred.

The meeting concluded at 7:40 pm