

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13 September 2016

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Larratt (Chair) M Hill, Ansell, Choudary and Duffy

OFFICERS: Mebs Kassam (Solicitor) Ian Ellis (Licensing Enforcement Officer) Louise Faulkner (Senior Licensing Officer) Emma Powley (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Beardsworth, Sargeant, Caswell, Duffy and G Eales.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th July 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

RESOLVED: That under Item 6 and 7 Mr S Wilshire and Mr K Wilshire were granted to leave to address the Committee and under Item 7 Mr Ward was granted to leave to address the Committee.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

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 Senior Licensing Officer submitted a report to give consideration to consulting with interested parties as to introducing a Private Hire and Taxi Vehicle Emissions Policy to improve the air quality and to reduce the health impact for the residents of Northampton Town. It was explained that on the 8th June 2016, Cabinet approved, for public consultation, a draft Northampton Low Emission Strategy (NLES) including a strategy to improve the emissions for the private hire and taxi vehicles. At this point, the Senior Licensing Officer submitted an amended report to the table at 3.1.10 of the report, which highlighted the higher pollutant emission category of the Euro 5.

Mr S Wilshire addressed the Committee and stated that a number of taxi and private hire drivers had already purchased vehicles due to the relaxation of the age limit of vehicles in Northampton and that the potential move to Low Emission Vehicles could have huge financial implications and costs on taxi drivers. He suggested that some drivers would have to invest up to £65k on a new vehicle and explained that there were no Euro compliant vehicles available to the Hackney Trade and urged the Committee to reject the proposed consultation.

Mr K Wilshire stated that Hackney drivers could face greater financial problems than Private Hire drivers if an Emissions Policy was approved as the cost of Hackney carriages were

significantly higher than Private Hire Vehicles and new ones would need to be purchased. He stated that Hackney drivers were already on their knees and questioned why the Council had allowed for a Bus Station to be built within the Town Centre and yet were potentially penalising drivers of Hackneys and Private Hire Vehicles with a Low Emission Strategy. He stated that to cap the number of Taxis and PHV's would help the trade as it would limit the amount of competition.

The Chair asked officers to draft a report for the Licensing Committee to be held on the 18th October 2016 to recommend a survey be undertaken to explore the possibility to introduce a cap to be carried out in consultation with legal requirements.

Mr Andrew Whittles (Low Emission Strategies Limited) explained to the Committee that it was evidenced that diesel fuel emissions were carcinogenic and that a Government study had reported that 10% of all deaths on Northampton were due to air pollution. It was further noted that research had shown that pollution could contribute to the onset of Alzheimer's and impacted on childhood cognitive development and that there was a real urge to tackle it. He reported that current diesel cars had similar emissions as 10 year old petrol cars and noted that grants would be made available by the Government to assist towards the costs of purchasing new low emission vehicles for taxi and private hire drivers. He confirmed that there were some issues with the Euro 5 vehicles and therefore Petrol Euro 4 Diesel Euro 6 were regarded as being better and already in production. It was reported that once a new vehicle had been purchased, the financial cost of ownership would be significantly reduced in comparison to the current vehicles. Mr Whittles explained that due to the high levels of pollution and emissions in Northampton, there was still potential for County Council to be prosecuted under European Law.

RESOLVED:

That it be agreed to consult on the proposed emissions policy at Appendix A of the report.

7. TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE AGE POLICY

The Senior Licensing Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which was to give consideration to a Private Hire & Taxi Vehicle Age and Exceptional Standards Policy to improve the standards of older vehicles currently licensed by the authority.

Mr K Wilshire addressed the Committee and reported that at no time had there been an age policy in Northampton and stated that the proposed introduction of the checklists would merely act as a further layer of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork.

Mr Ward stated that whilst he had not supported the notion of having an age restriction, he would be in support of a maximum age limit on vehicles.

Mr S Wilshire stated that he was not in favour of an age policy as it would be unfair to the trade to restrict certain vehicles.

RESOLVED:

That it be agreed for a consultation on the proposed age policy at Appendix A of the report.

8. CUMULATIVE IMPACT POLICY

This item was withdrawn.

9. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the Public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting

on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was Carried.

10. APPLICATION FOR A PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE

The Senior Licensing Officer outlined the circumstances as set out in the report.

The Committee heard the representations made and reached a decision with regard to any further action to be taken/

DECISION:

The Committee decided to grant the Private Hire Driver's License to the individual who was considered to be a fit and proper person.

11. REVIEW OF PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE

This item was adjourned to the next Licensing Committee to be held on the 18th October 2016.

The meeting concluded at 7.44pm