

North Yorkshire Council

General Licensing and Registration Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm.

Councillor Tim Grogan in the Chair plus Councillors Joy Andrews, Alyson Baker, Derek Bastiman, Philip Broadbank, Barbara Brodigan, Felicity Cunliffe-Lister, Stephanie Duckett, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, Robert Heseltine, George Jabbour (as a substitute for Councillor Roberta Swiers), Mike Jordan, Andrew Lee, John Mann, Andy Paraskos, Jack Proud and Subash Sharma.

In attendance: Councillor Greg White.

Officers present: Gareth Bentley, Simon Fisher, St John Harris and Laura Venn.

Apologies: Councillors John Cattanach, Roberta Swiers and Malcolm Taylor.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

7 Apologies for absence

Apologies noted (see above).

8 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

9 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interests.

10 Public participation

There were no public questions or statements.

11 Adoption of an Inclusive Service Plan focused on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing

Considered

The report of the Corporate Director - Environment in respect of a new Inclusive Service Plan in relation to hackney carriage and private hire licensing.

Introducing the report, the Head of Licensing explained the background to the draft Inclusive Service Plan which had arisen from the council's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, the Executive's commitment from February 2023 to develop such a Plan, and Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guidance issued by the Department for Transport in November 2023. Further, in September 2023, the council commissioned a research project into wheelchair accessibility to support the development

of an Inclusive Service Plan. The research revealed a likely shortage of licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles based on anecdotal evidence and supported by comparisons with national data.

The proposals in the report stopped short of imposing a mandatory wheelchair accessible requirement on all licensed vehicles; instead seeking to achieve the desired outcome by less burdensome means on operators. This would be by introducing a new requirement for all hackney carriage vehicles to be either wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) or zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) (thereby having regard to DEFRA's Air Quality Strategy), whilst not extending this requirement to private hire vehicles.

Members of the committee then discussed the report and asked questions. Key points made were as follows:

- Of 777 licensed hackney carriage vehicles, 69 were WAVs and 10 were ZEVs
- Of 863 licensed private hire vehicles, 40 were WAVs and 10 were ZEVs
- Geographical distribution of WAVs varied considerably across the county e.g. 15.8% in Selby district and 4.5% in Harrogate district
- The report relied primarily on the recent research commissioned and anecdotal evidence from liaising with disability action groups. Complaints data was not available, but expectations among wheelchair users of obtaining a licensed WAV were very low and therefore many users would expect to address their transport needs by other means outside the licensing regime
- Members were concerned that there was no data on the number of wheelchair users in the county and that the research commissioned was based on national statistics. For some disabled people their disability did not affect their mobility so they could use non-WAVs.
- The proposals in the report sought to increase WAVs to meet the undersupply whilst achieving a mixed fleet
- Some drivers in the Harrogate area returned their WAV licences when under the harmonisation of licensing policy it no longer became a requirement in the Harrogate area for newly licensed vehicles to be WAVs. This illustrated the point that it was less profitable for operators to provide WAVs, so other measures needed to be identified to encourage their use
- The draft policy was the first step ahead of a consultation process with taxi operators and other stakeholders
- Members suggested that more work could be done in preparing the draft policy to consider possible incentives to encourage operators to adopt WAVs, to benchmark with comparator local authorities and identify best practice, to quantify the cost differential between WAV and non-WAVs, to balance the needs of wheelchair users with the economic impact on operators, to consider hybrid vehicles in addition to ZEVs, and to ensure that the draft policy was not too narrow therefore allowing other ideas to be given serious consideration through the public consultation

Following the debate it was proposed that a Task and Finish Group of members of the committee be established to explore some of the key questions raised in respect of the draft Inclusive Service Plan and so address members' concerns with a view to bringing their findings and recommendations back to the committee in due course.

Resolved

That:

- (i) a Task and Finish Group of members of the committee be established to explore some of the key questions raised in respect of the draft Inclusive Service Plan

and so address members' concerns with a view to bringing their findings and recommendations back to the committee in due course.

- (ii) The committee defer making any recommendations to the Executive pending the outcome of the review by the Task and Finish Group.
- (iii) Councillors Grogan, Kevin Foster, Brodigan, Jordan, Lee and Mann be appointed to the Task and Finish Group.

12 Review of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

Considered

The report of the Corporate Director - Environment in respect of a proposal to revise the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

Introducing the report, the Head of Licensing noted that given the Inclusive Service Plan formed a large part of the revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, it was not possible to progress the report at this stage.

Members agreed and suggested that the remit of the Task and Finish Group appointed at Minute 11 be expanded to consider other potential elements of the revised draft policy, for example:

- Removal of the 10 year age limit on both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and replacement with a requirement to meet the Euro 6 emission standards
- Licensing of executive vehicles
- Installation of CCTV in licensed vehicles

Resolved

that the remit of the Task and Finish Group appointed at Minute 11 be expanded as indicated above.

13 Any other items

There were no urgent items of business.

The meeting concluded at 3.26 pm.