

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of the meeting of the **Licensing Committee** held on Tuesday 8th April 2014 in Council Chamber B, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 10.55 a.m.)

Present: Cllr. Nigel Mermagen (Chairman)

Nick Colbert
Roy Mills
Wes Read

Martin Wale
William Wallace

Officers:

Nigel Marston
Angela Cox

Licensing Manager
Democratic Services Manager

23. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on Tuesday 11th February 2014, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Bulmer, John V Chainey, Pauline Clarke, Tony Fife, Jenny Kenton, Tony Lock, Paul Maxwell, David Norris and Linda Vijeh.

25. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Public Participation (Agenda Item 4)**Question/comments from members of the public**

It was agreed that the members of the public present would speak at the time the item was discussed.

27. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy (Agenda Item 5)

The Licensing Manager reminded Members that they had requested further options to consider for inclusion in the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy relating to Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles and to improve the age and quality of licensed vehicles within South Somerset. He outlined the 3 options listed in the agenda report which he proposed and advised that he recommended option 2 as a reasonable compromise position. He also advised Members of the Licensing policies of some neighbouring authorities.

Mr K Beaton of Airline Taxis advised that he had a number of issues with each of the proposed options. The space available on the taxi rank in Silver Street, Yeovil was already limited to 8 or 9 vehicles and this would be further reduced if all new taxis were required to have disabled access. Whilst he agreed that there should be some more wheelchair accessible vehicles, he said there was not really the demand for them in the rural area. He also said that some elderly customers had difficulty climbing in and out of disabled access vehicles due to their height and they preferred to use a car. On balance he said that option 3 was his preferred option.

Mr D Lilley, a private taxi operator, said that making every taxi vehicle wheelchair accessible was not necessary. He said the Silver Street rank in Yeovil could not load wheelchairs from the side due to the slope of the hill and to require rear-loading vehicles would further reduce the space available on that rank. He also felt that there were other issues in the policy which required further debate.

In response to questions from Members, the Licensing Manager confirmed that:-

- Public consultation had taken place and the majority of responses had been positive.
- The point made regarding space on the Silver Street taxi rank in Yeovil was noted and it may be possible to create a new rank elsewhere within the town.
- Annual tests of all licensed vehicles were carried out by SSDC and the frequency was determined by the vehicle's mileage.
- Positive discrimination was allowed under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

During discussion Members made the following points:-

- Some new taxis were driven 24/7 by different drivers and some were driven by sole operators therefore to use the mileage of a vehicle as a restriction was misleading.
- Regular maintenance of a licensed vehicle was more important than its age.
- The public could telephone for a WAV if one was not immediately available on a taxi rank.

At the conclusion of the debate, it was proposed and seconded to insert Option 3 into the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy, with the following amendments:-

- a) All HCV's to be less than 5 years old from first registration with DVLA but any new vehicle applications to be restricted to WAV's until 50% of the fleet is wheelchair accessible.
- b) No restriction on the use of side or rear loading WAV's.
- c) The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy to be reviewed in 12 months time by the Licensing Committee.

- RESOLVED:** (1) That the Licensing Committee propose that Option 3 be inserted into the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy with the following amendments:-
- a) All HCV's to be less than 5 years old from first registration with DVLA but any new vehicle applications to be restricted to WAV's until 50% of the fleet is wheelchair accessible.
 - b) No restriction on the use of side or rear loading WAV's.
 - c) The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy to be reviewed in 12 months time by the Licensing Committee.
- (2) The draft Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Policy (as amended by 1 above) be presented to Full Council for approval.

(Voting: unanimous in favour)

(Nigel Marston, Licensing Manager – 01935 462150)
(nigel.marston@southsomerset.gov.uk)

28. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 8)

Members noted that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee would be held on Tuesday 10th June 2014 at 10.00 a.m. at the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

.....
Chairman