

**South Somerset District Council**

**Draft Minutes** of the meeting of the **Licensing Committee** held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2014 in Council Chamber B, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

(10.00 a.m. – 11.20 a.m.)

**Present:** Cllr. Nigel Mermagen (Chairman)

Dave Bulmer  
Roy Mills

Wes Read  
Linda Vijeh

**Officers:**

Nigel Marston	Licensing Manager
Colin Chown	Licensing Enforcement Officer
Jo Morgan	Equalities Officer
Jo Morris	Democratic Services Officer

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In the absence of the Licensing Committee Vice Chairman, Councillor Dave Bulmer was appointed as Vice Chairman for the meeting.

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**15. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)**

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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**16. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Clarke, Tony Lock, Martin Wale and William Wallace.

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**17. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

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**18. Public Participation (Agenda Item 4)**

Comments from members of the public present were taken during the relevant agenda item.

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

The Licensing Manager summarised the agenda report which informed members of the results of the consultation on the Taxi Licensing Policy. He informed members that there had been broad agreement to most of the proposals apart from two particular areas - requirements in relation to wheelchair accessible vehicles and the requirement for all vehicles to be new at first licensing. Members were further informed that 25% of the responses were from the general public and 75% were from the taxi and private hire trade. There had been a good response to the consultation with a total of 49 responses being received.

The Licensing Manager reported that he had undertaken some work with the Equality Steering Group and the South Somerset Disability Forum to discuss the issues faced by disability groups and the results were outlined in the agenda report.

He referred to the recommendations outlined in the report which suggested that the Licensing Manager review the draft policy in light of the consultation results and to draft further options for consideration at the April Licensing Committee meeting with a view to getting final approval at Full Council.

The Committee then noted the comments of Mr M Campbell, Mr M Rowsell, Mr D Lilley, Mr S Shayler and Ms C Cobb. Views expressed included the following:

- With reference to making all vehicles wheelchair accessible, concerns were raised over the cost to taxi service providers which could result in a reduction in accessible taxis;
- The difficulties with booking a disabled accessible taxi before 10.00am as they were often used for school run contracts. It was felt that there should be more accessible taxis available and that disabled customers should not have to wait for a taxi;
- There was a need for drivers and operators to undertake disability awareness training as it was essential to have a good understanding of customers different needs;
- The knowledge test was essential as many drivers had no proper knowledge of the local area;
- It was going over the top by making all vehicles wheelchair accessible and not all drivers would be able to afford it;
- The current rank in Yeovil was in the wrong place for disabled people and was difficult to access due to the slope;
- Not all drivers had received a copy of the Code of Conduct;
- It was felt that the choice and make of vehicle should be included in the policy.

In response to comments raised the Licensing Manager responded that:

- He would take on board the comments about the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles during the school run. Disabled people should have the same access to transport as anybody else;
- It was envisaged that a revised Code of Conduct would be part of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy to be considered by Full Council;
- Disability Awareness Training for drivers would be included within the revised Policy;
- He was happy to look at other rank locations and suggested the following additional recommendation:

The Licensing Manager to undertake a review of taxi ranks in South Somerset with a view to providing more wheelchair accessible taxi ranks.

During consideration of the item, Members made the following comments:

- It was felt that it was not necessary to insist upon new vehicles being wheelchair accessible. It was not unreasonable for a 2-3 year old car to be adapted;
- Support was given for the taxi rank in Yeovil to be relocated. Opposite Argos was suggested as an ideal location;
- Support for a sufficient number of vehicles to be wheelchair accessible was expressed although it was felt that 100% of vehicles could be counterproductive;
- If the Policy adopted was too rigid it could restrict the number of taxis operating in South Somerset and therefore should not be too over prescriptive.

It was proposed and seconded to approve the recommendations outlined in the report plus the following additional recommendation:

The Licensing Manager to undertake a review of taxi ranks in South Somerset with a view to providing more wheelchair accessible taxi ranks.

On being put to the vote, members unanimously agreed the recommendations.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the Licensing Manager review the draft policy in light of the consultation results in relation to wheelchair accessible vehicles, age of vehicles on first licensing, vehicle emission standards and additional testing requirements;
  - (2) That the Licensing Manager draft further options for consideration that will achieve an increase in the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles and promote increased public safety;
  - (3) That the Licensing Manager bring back these options to the Licensing Committee in April 2014.
  - (4) The Licensing Manager to undertake a review of taxi ranks in South Somerset with a view to providing more wheelchair accessible taxi ranks.

*(Voting: unanimous)*

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

## **20. Enforcement Update (Agenda Item 6)**

The Licensing Enforcement Officer summarised the report, which updated members on the work of the Licensing Enforcement Team and the various issues that they were currently involved with.

Members were content to note the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

*(Colin Chown, Licensing Enforcement Officer – 01935 462135)  
(colin.chown@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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**21. Law Commission Update (Agenda Item 7)**

The Licensing Manager summarised the Law Commission update report on Taxi and Private Hire Services, which set out proposals for the future.

**NOTED.**

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**22. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 8)**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee would be held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at 10.00 a.m. at the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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Chairman