

### Notes of Meeting with John Furze, Locum Town Clerk, Yeovil Town Council re: Delegation of Taxi Licensing to Town Councils

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015 – 12.00 p.m.**

Present: John Furze – Town Clerk  
Nigel Marston – Licensing Manager, SSDC  
Emily McGuinness – Scrutiny Manager SSDC

- Emily McGuinness explained the purpose of the meeting – in 2014 South West Audit Partnership conducted an audit of Town Council Licensing – one of the recommendations from this report was that the current delegation arrangements with Yeovil and Wincanton Town Councils be reviewed by SSDC to ensure the arrangements remain fit for purpose for all parties involved. Consequently, Officers of Wincanton Town Council had been asked for an informal meeting to provide factual information to support such a review.
- A Scrutiny Task and Finish Group looking at the wider issue of Licensing Fees would be looking at this matter and would make recommendations to the appropriate member level decision making body in due course. It was stressed that at this stage, SSDC were on a 'fact finding' exercise – looking to ensure that members are in possession of all relevant facts before taking any decisions about future service delivery options.
- It was stressed that no complaints had been received about current service provision but that the arrangements were last reviewed in 2005 and we had to be sure that arrangements represent the best value for taxpayers' money.
- In advance of the meeting, Yeovil Town Council had been asked to provide some additional information relating to income and expenditure figures – this information was tabled at the meeting as is as follows:
  - o In the last financial year Yeovil Town Council Renewed 13 Taxi Driver Licences, 18 Taxi Vehicle Licenses, 1 Private Hire Vehicle Licence, 95 Street Trading Licenses, 53 Charitable Collections (Street Collections) and 8 Charitable Collections (door to door)
  - o Income from Driver licensing was £1,300
  - o Income from vehicle licensing was £400
  - o Staff time administering the Licensing function at YTC is estimated to be 500 hours p.a. which equates to about 50-60% of an officer's time.
- The office opening hours at Yeovil Town Council are Monday – Thursday 8.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. and Friday 8.40 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.
- Taxi Drivers are able to apply on-line for all Licenses.

- The Clerk was of the opinion that if Taxi Licensing was centralised and the current delegation arrangements ended there would be little or no impact – the staff currently working on Licensing duties could easily be redeployed – due to physical office spaces, it's difficult to expand team numbers but there were plenty of other tasks to do. He went on to say that it seemed sensible to him to centralise Taxi Licensing as it was a generic service that was applied in the same way across the whole district with no scope for local flavour – he could see no logical reason for the Town Council retaining the function.
- However, he did feel there was a strong case for the Town Council to retain responsibility for Licensing of Street Trading as this was a service particular to Yeovil and could have a very visible impact on the Town Centre ( as well as generating income) delegating this function to the Town Council could be seen as 'localism in action'.

At the end of the meeting, an undertaking was given to keep the Clerk updated on the progress of the review and that as the Delegation agreement stated that 6 months notice was required by either party to end the agreement, every effort would be made to have concluded this work in time for the 2016/17 budget setting process.

It was explained that any final decision on future arrangements would be made by SSDC elected members in line with the Constitution (clarification was sought on whether any final decision would be taken by Council or District Executive).