

**LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE held at
COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON
WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 11 JULY 2023 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor A Armstrong (Chair)
Councillors M Ahmed, N Church, G Driscoll, J Moran and
A Reeve

Officers in attendance: T Cobden (Environmental Health Manager - Commercial),
J Livermore (Senior Licensing and Compliance Officer),
S Mahoney (Licensing and Compliance Manager) and
C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer)

Public
Speakers: A Mahoney

LIC10 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Mr Andy Mahoney addressed the committee. A summary of his statement is appended to these minutes.

LIC11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Davey, Dean and Regan.

There were no declarations of interest.

LIC12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The following minutes were approved as a correct record:

- 1st February 2023
- 23rd March 2023 (Licensing Panel)
- 26th May 2023 (Licensing Panel)
- 13th June 2023 (Licensing Panel)

LIC13 INTRODUCTION OF A RESTRICTED PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER LICENCE

The Licensing and Compliance Manager presented a report on the introduction of a Restricted Private Hire Driver Licence which would be issued to drivers undertaking home-to-school transportation journeys whilst contracted to a Local Education Authority (LEA).

In response to questions from members, officers clarified the following:

- A working group would be responsible for designing the training which Drivers would have to undertake in order to obtain the new Licence. This would be led by GreenPenny, the Council's current training provider, and

would consult with the Council's own Safeguarding Officer and other parties in the Education sector.

- The current training course for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage licencing is approximately seven and a half hours long, but the new course for the restricted licence will be tailored to focus on that specific type of work, which should reduce the overall course duration to applicants.
- The cost of producing the new licence and badge would be recovered through the fees paid to obtain one.
- A driver with the new restricted licence would only be able to offer home-to-school journeys under their LAE contract. Should they wish to work outside of this remit and provide other private hire journeys, then they would be required to also obtain a Private Hire Licence.
- The design of the restricted licence badge would be different from the other licence badges in order to display the restriction to the public and other authorities.

RESOLVED:

1. To agree the introduction of restricted Private Hire Driver licenses as an option available for the purposes of LEA approved home-to-school transportation only.
2. To agree that this Licence type is available from 1 August 2023.
3. To delegate authority to the Licensing and Compliance Manager, in conjunction with the Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, to make minor amendments to the existing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 10 May 2021, and Conditions of Licence if amendments are deemed necessary.
4. To note why the option of a restricted PHD licence has many benefits, including to support the LEA with their school transportation obligations.

Cllr A Reeve left at 19:24

LIC14 ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The Senior Licensing and Compliance Officer presented a report on the compliance and enforcement activities carried out by Licensing Officers during the period of 1 January 2023 to 31 May 2023.

In response to a question from Councillor Driscoll, it was clarified that Licensing Officers had the power to suspend a licence, should they find anything of significance during a check or inspection. Many of their activities were carried out in partnership with other agencies, such as the DVLA and police, who also had additional powers.

The report was noted.

Meeting ended at 19:33

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Mr Andy Mahoney

Mr Mahoney spoke in support of the proposal for a Restricted Private Hire Driver Licence which would be issued to drivers undertaking home-to-school transportation journeys. He said it would make a difference to everyone within the schools community.

Mr Mahoney explained that there was a critical driver shortage with 20,000 drivers less than there was 14 years ago. More importantly, there were 200,000 drivers who currently drove for companies such as Uber and Bolt and were unable to do a home-to-school contract. There had been a further loss in driver numbers due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a result of the shortage, children all over the country could not get to school. The hope was that a licence for home-to-school contracts would encourage some of the drivers which were needed to come into the industry. This included older drivers, back-to-work parents, retired/semi-retired people who all do the best job at taking special needs children to school. The proposed licence would also help support local authorities, including Essex, who had requirements under legislation which they were currently unable to do successfully.

Mr Mahoney said that drivers should be trained in the job which they were doing and the proposed licence would ensure that Uttlesford licenced school drivers would be trained for the job which they do, for the first time, and not for the job that they don't do as they were not general taxi drivers, but dedicated school drivers.

He concluded by asking that the committee looked positively at the introduction of the new licence. There were many different authorities that were putting their weight behind it in support, including local authorities, licencing authorities, the Institute of Licensing, the Department for Education, ATCO, Welsh Government and the Private Hire Association.