

**LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE held at
COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON
WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2018 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillor R Chambers (Chairman)
Councillors G Barker, J Davey and E Hicks

Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), T Cobden (Environmental Health Manager - Commercial), O Rawlings (Licensing Consultant), E Smith (Solicitor), A Turner (Licensing Team Leader) and M Watts (Environmental Health Manager - Protection)

LIC70 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Foley, Gerard, Goddard and Morris.

LIC71 REVIEW OF UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S TAXI LICENSING POLICIES

In response to statements made by public speakers, the Chairman said the decision by Members would be whether or not the review of policy was sent out for consultation. This would not mean a final decision on the content of the policy had been made. Members of the public, including the trade, would have a chance to respond to this consultation. However, it was important for Members to have input first. There was no need for another task group to be set up when a consultation would do the same work.

The Licensing Consultant gave a summary of the report and each of the recommendations.

In response to a Member question, the Licensing Consultant said new driver training and testing would not require applicants to take a specific language test. However it would be necessary for applicants to have a basic level of English in order to perform to an acceptable standard in the competency test.

In response to a Member question, officers said applicants were obliged to reveal any information about themselves which might cause officers to believe they were not a fit and proper person to be a licensed taxi driver. This included acquittals. This was because the Committee's decisions had to be made on the balance of probability, as opposed to establishing whether a person was not fit and proper beyond all reasonable doubt. Wording asking applicants about previous arrests and acquittals would be included on the application form if this aspect of the policy review was approved.

In response to a Member question, the Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) said the £85 cost of a driving proficiency test was a comparatively small amount over the period of time that it would be relevant for.

In response to statements by members of the public, the Licensing Consultant said applications for vehicles which did not meet the standards of the vehicle age and emissions policy would still need to be considered on the vehicle's own merits, and vehicles that contravened the policy could still be approved with good reason.

Councillor Barker said he found it problematic that the policy stated a vehicle should be in 'near perfect condition'.

The Chairman said further meetings would be held with the trade if Members approved the recommendations to send the policy review out for consultation.

RESOLVED to approve that the policy review proposals be sent out for an 8 week consultation with the licensing trade and the public.

B Drinkwater, D Perry and A Mahoney spoke on this item. Summaries of their statements are appended to these minutes.

The meeting ended at 8.45.

Summary of Statement by D Perry:

D Perry said the trade were disappointed that they had not been invited to engage on the policy review before this presentation. The Council's Constitution acknowledged that consultation with its citizens was important. The report did not mention any proposed changes with regard to CCTV cameras in licensed vehicles. The trade was pleased, in principle, to see driver training and education as a recurring theme in the review. D Perry reminded those present that ULODA's mission was to unite the trade through education, information and compliance'.

Summary of Statement by B Drinkwater:

B Drinkwater said the informal forum held between officers, Members and the trade to discuss proposals on Licensing fees was an excellent example of collaborative working. ULODA strongly felt that a Licensing Policy Task Group should be appointed to advise on policy changes. There was also a concern that drivers would have to pay to go through 'further hoops' which may be a barrier to entry for them. The trade's overarching concern was to have 'meaningful, constructive and convivial collaboration with officers and members'.

Summary of Statement by A Mahoney:

A Mahoney said he believed the minimum standard for drivers was set so high that it might create a shortfall of new applicants, and add to the length of time it would take for applications to be approved. School contract work was the largest area of work carried out by 24/7 Ltd, much of which was focused on special needs. However vehicles adapted to transport children with special needs would

not be approved under the new age and emissions policy. 24/7 Ltd already ran their own training and testing, and it was important not to over-train drivers.