

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Licensing Committee

Meeting held 25 July 2013

PRESENT: Councillors John Robson (Chair), Nikki Bond, Roger Davison, Neale Gibson, Adam Hurst, George Lindars-Hammond, Clive Skelton (Deputy Chair), Stuart Wattam, Philip Wood and Cliff Woodcraft

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jenny Armstrong, Jillian Creasy and Nikki Sharpe.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 The minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Committee held on 15th May and 4th June and the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 15th, 22nd, 23rd, 25th and 29th April, 9th, 13th, 16th, 20th and 23rd May and 3rd and 6th June, 2013, were approved as correct records.

5. PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENSING - ENFORCEMENT REVIEW

5.1 The Committee received a report of the Chief Licensing Officer outlining the enforcement activity undertaken in relation to private hire and taxi licensing for the period 1st September, 2012 to 31st May, 2013.

5.2 In attendance were Clive Stephenson, Principal Licensing Officer and Zulfiqar Ahmed, Sheffield Taxi Trade Association (STTA).

5.3 In presenting the report, Clive Stephenson stated that the Licensing Section received numerous complaints and photographs almost daily relating to the taxi rank and cycle lane in Castle Street. He informed Members that every complaint made was investigated and that a number of warning letters and formal warnings have been issued to drivers who have repeatedly transgressed in this area, although he commented that when the Market moves to the bottom of the Moor, in his opinion, the problem will cease.

- 5.4 In response to questions from Members of the Committee, Clive Stephenson stated that enforcement was carried out in areas such as Crystal Peaks, where there were a number of “out of town” taxi vehicles arriving and departing, but these vehicles were outside the jurisdiction of Sheffield and therefore officers could not undertake enforcement activities, but could report issues of concern to the relevant licensing authority.
- 5.5 Zulfiqar Ahmed stated that since the Licensing Office had moved to Staniforth Road, there appeared to be a lack of enforcement on City Road and felt the members of the STTA were being discriminated against, that complaints made had not been followed up and that enforcement officers did not work during the hours when illegal plying for hire by private hire drivers took place. The Chair suggested that these issues could be addressed at a meeting of the Taxi Forum.
- 5.6 Some Members were alarmed at the amount of vehicles checked and faults found and asked Clive Stephenson to clarify the nature and extent of these, to which Clive responded that these ranged from notices inside cars not being displayed to MOT faults, lights not working, doors signs on private hire vehicles not being displayed etc., but he commented that the standard of licensed vehicles are very good and generally do stand up to the tests carried out by the Council.
- 5.7 With regard to questions from Members regarding warnings to drivers, Clive Stephenson said that each transgression is judged on its merit and the time lapsed between warnings if appropriate, and then brought to Committee rather than prosecution through the Courts.
- 5.8 Along with the problems highlighted in the report, Members raised a number of areas of concern namely:-
- Taxi ranks that are time-limited and left standing empty i.e. on Ecclesall Road and Chesterfield Road, outside the Big Tree public house.
 - The Carver Street taxi rank which has been moved to opposite sides of the road.
 - Parking problems at Sheffield Station since its redevelopment.
- 5.8 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the information contained in the report and makes no changes to the frequency or type of enforcement activity undertaken, but requests that future quarterly reports on enforcement activity include decisions taken by the Magistrates Court when appeals are made to them.