

Licensing Committee

Meeting held 22 June 2020

(NOTE: This meeting was held as a remote meeting in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.)

**PRESENT:** Councillors Karen McGowan (Chair), Andy Bainbridge, Dawn Dale, Roger Davison, Adam Hurst, Douglas Johnson, Ruth Mersereau, Joe Otten, Josie Paszek, Vickie Priestley, Bob Pullin, Sioned-Mair Richards, Jim Steinke and Cliff Woodcraft

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mick Rooney.

**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 meetings of (a) this Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> March and 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 and (b) the Sub-Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2020, be approved as correct records.

**5. REVIEW OF EMERGENCY OFFICER DELEGATIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

5.1 The Chief Licensing Officer submitted a report containing a review of the additional temporary delegations granted to the Chief Licensing Officer at the meeting of the Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020, to enable the continued management of the Licensing Service during the ongoing position with Coronavirus (Covid-19). The report was supported by a presentation by Craig Harper (Licensing Strategy and Policy Officer) on the progress made in connection with the delegations since the last meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

5.2 Mr Harper referred to statistics regarding vehicle test attendance, vehicle test results, hackney carriage and private hire vehicle renewals, driver renewals and vehicle extension requests.

5.3 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- Whilst there was no definitive answer as to why there was such a high number of drivers not renewing their licences, it was believed that it was due to drivers either shielding from Covid-19, caring for friends or relatives suffering from the virus, or simply not renewing their licences due to a lack of work. There was no indication that any drivers would be leaving the trade.
- Whilst the figures with regard to suspensions following vehicle tests were higher than normal, there were no clear reasons as to why this was the case. It was believed that it could be due to a number of garages not opening during the pandemic, resulting in drivers not being able to take their vehicles for routine maintenance. Officers would continue to monitor this position.
- It was believed that there were sufficient resources within the Licensing Service to deal with all the paperwork required as part of the applications process.
- A proportion of drivers were continuing to work. However, many areas of work were thought to have reduced, including school contract work. Only a small percentage of drivers had not renewed their licences.
- Whilst the Service had provided guidance in terms of the installation of temporary protective screens in private hire vehicles, it was directing drivers to the Department for Transport for more detailed, and up to date, advice on issues, including asking the public to wear face coverings and winding down windows when riding in private hire vehicles. Drivers were also being asked to use masks and sanitiser where possible. City Taxis and Uber were in the process of installing screens in their vehicles, and were providing masks and sanitiser for their drivers. There was no issue regarding hackney carriages.
- It was not clear as to how long the additional temporary delegations would remain in place as this was subject to Government changes in terms of social-distancing measures. Applications for premises licences continued to be considered by the Licensing Sub-Committee where, as part of the applications, premises would be inspected in the normal manner, with social-distancing. The Service was awaiting guidance in terms of officers visiting licensed premises.

5.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the information reported as part of the presentation, and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) agrees to continue with the additional temporary delegations; and
- (c) requests the Chief Licensing Officer to submit a report to the Committee in a

month's time containing details of any changes made by the Government which would have implications for the Licensing Service.

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