

LICENSING COMMITTEE
13TH FEBRUARY 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 13th February 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor Tony Sharps (Chairman)

Councillors: Glyn Banks, David Cox, Adele Davies-Cooke, Rob Davies, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Brian Lloyd and Martin White.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Ted Palmer, Mike Reece and Ralph Small.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Community and Business Protection Manager, Licensing Team Leader, Solicitor and Team Leader - Democratic Services.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

15. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th November had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16. WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the Welsh Government Consultation: Improving Public Transport report which sought consideration of the draft response to questions 22 to 38 of the consultation.

Welsh Government (WG) had prepared a White Paper, entitled 'Improving Public Transport', setting out changes to how public transport, including taxi services, would be delivered in the future.

The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the WG legislative proposals for reforming the planning and delivery of local bus services in Wales, together with the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles (PHV's). The intention of the proposals was to:

- Provide the flexibility to better respond to local public transport needs; and
- Ensure consistency and co-ordination of bus service delivery and a more modern approach to taxi/PHV licensing.

WG indicated that their preferred option constituted implementation of the following four proposals, also known as 'Option A'.

- **Proposal 1:** the standardisation of taxi and PHV standards between the twenty two local authorities in Wales;
- **Proposal 2:** the inability to take enforcement action against vehicles operating 'out of area';
- **Proposal 3:** the difficulty in sharing relevant information in relation to safeguarding; and
- **Proposal 4:** that the existing taxi and PHV licensing functions of the twenty two Welsh local authorities should be redirected to a single national licensing authority. The national authority would be joint transport authority (JTA).

WG had also put forward an 'Option B' for consideration, which would include the implementation of proposals 1-3 above, without proposal 4.

Proposal 1- Questions 22-27 of the consultation addressed the introduction of national standards. The Council was in agreement that the setting of national standards would benefit the current licensing regime, and the response reflected that opinion.

Proposal 2: Questions 28-30 addressed enforcement and the proposal to allow a licensing authority to take enforcement action against any vehicle operating in its area. The Council was in agreement that the power to suspend a vehicle operating in its area where it caused a direct threat to public safety would be welcome, but that any further action should be taken by the home authority. By doing this, the Council would remove the immediate risk to the public and report the matter back to the home authority.

Proposal 3: Questions 31 and 32 addressed information sharing for the purposes of safeguarding, which the Council agreed was critical.

Proposal 4: Questions 33- 38 addressed the WG proposal to redirect all existing taxi functions away from local authorities and into a national licensing authority. The Council did not agree to the proposal. There was no evidence to support the need to redirect the function away from local authorities and there was no detail in the White Paper to explain how the JTA would undertake the licensing function.

Councillor White commented on WG identifying issues with the current regime, such as inconsistent standards across local authorities. The Licensing Team Leader explained that Flintshire standards were high and robust.

In response to a comment from Councillor Chris Dolphin, the Licensing Team Leader said the issue of safeguarding would not be at a cost, it was about not currently having the ability to share information across different local authorities and having a mechanism in place to enable that to happen.

Councillor Banks welcomed the report and said the responses outlined were common sense which he hoped WG would listen to.

Members supported the draft response to questions 22-38 of the consultation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft response to questions 22-38 of the consultation be supported; and
- (b) That Members did not have anything further they wished to add to the draft response.

17. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public present.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 10.32am)

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Chairman