

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING, TAXI LICENSING & RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 13 JANUARY 2022

PRESENT

County Councillor K Lewis (Chair)

County Councillors G Jones, L V Corfield, L George, M J Jones, F H Jump, H Lewis, D R Price, K Laurie-Parry, P C Pritchard, G Pugh, D Selby, K S Silk, L Skilton, E Vaughan, G I S Williams, D H Williams, R Williams and J Wilkinson

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors E M Jones and M Weale.

The Chair advised that as the Professional Lead – Planning was in attendance for the next item, he would take the Decisions of the Head of Property, Planning and Public Protection on Delegated applications after the minutes, rather than calling the officer back into the meeting later in the morning.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2021, subject to it being noted that County Councillor H Lewis had left the meeting prior to item 4.3 being discussed, as noted in the minutes and that the reference to him leaving the meeting after this item was incorrect.

Planning

3. DECISIONS OF THE HEAD OF PROPERTY, PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION ON DELEGATED APPLICATIONS

The Committee received for information a list of decisions made by the Head of Property, Planning and Public Protection during the period between 25 November 2021 and 4 January 2022.

Taxi and other licensing

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor D Price declared a prejudicial interest in item 6 - Holiday Caravan Site Licence Conditions.

5. TAXI LICENSING FEES 2022/23

The Committee considered the report regarding the Taxi Licensing Fees for 2022/23.

In response to questions regarding the impact of COVID on the taxi industry the Senior Licencing Officer advised that there were 20% less vehicles, the number of private hire operators had remained at 70 and although some drivers had not renewed their licences new driver applications were being received. She advised that due to COVID the level of business had slowed down and this was the same picture nationally. In response to a question regarding the level of fees the Senior Licencing Officer advised that the fees reflected the cost of processing licences within the authority. She advised that the Welsh Government is considering introducing national fees and fares as a standard across Wales.

It was moved and duly seconded to approve the officer's recommendation.

RESOLVED

That taxi fees for 2022/23 be approved to go out for consultation in the local press in line with statutory requirements and if not objected to will be in place for 1st April 2022. Any objections to the fees will come back to this committee for consideration.

County Councillor G Jones left the meeting to attend other Council business.

County Councillor P Pritchard joined the meeting after experiencing technical difficulties.

6.	TAXI LICENSING POLICY
-----------	------------------------------

The Committee considered the report regarding the Taxi Licensing Policy.

The Committee noted that the draft policy was based on Welsh Government Guidance on Taxi and Private Hire Standards. Utilising this guidance would ensure greater consistency in the way that local authorities in Wales apply and administer the taxi licensing regime and the standards used.

In response to a question regarding the use of dash cams in vehicles, the Senior Licencing Officer advised that the Welsh Government did not want to impose extra costs on the industry at this point in time. However, she considered it likely that the provision of dash cams would become mandatory in the future. In respect of the overseas criminal checks the officer advised that in addition to such checks a DBS check was also required.

It was moved and duly seconded to approve the officer's recommendation.

RESOLVED

To approve the draft Taxi Licensing Policy at Annex A for it to go out to consultation to the public, taxi trade and stakeholders for a period of 6 weeks. Any relevant comments or objections to the content will come back to this committee after the consultation period for consideration. If there are no relevant comments for the committee to consider then the policy will be published for implementation on 1st April 2022.

County Councillor D Price having declared a prejudicial interest left the meeting for the next item.

7.	HOLIDAY CARAVAN SITE LICENCE CONDITIONS
-----------	------------------------------------------------

The Committee considered the report regarding Holiday Caravan Site Licensing Conditions.

The Committee noted that the current conditions attached to licences were based on model standards that date back to 1983 and 1989 and these have never been revised or revisited. The authorities in the Four Counties Licensing Forum namely Pembrokeshire, Powys, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire have drafted a revised set of holiday and touring site license conditions.

In response to questions regarding the issue of people permanently living at holiday caravan sites and where they may not be paying any council tax, the Senior Licensing Officer advised that this was not a licensing issue. The Licensing Conditions relate to the conditions on a site rather than the occupancy of a site, which is a planning issue. The Solicitor advised that any issues regarding the inappropriate occupancy of a holiday caravan site should be logged on the Planning Authority's Enforcement website and planning officers would then investigate.

The Senior Licensing Officer advised, in response to a question regarding the status of pods and lodges, that if these were moveable structures, they would be subject to the caravan licence conditions. In response to a question regarding the inspection of caravan sites, the Senior Licencing Officer advised that a programme of inspections of holiday caravan sites are undertaken each year. In addition to the caravan licencing conditions the owners of sites would need to comply with other legislation and details of these had been listed in the policy.

It was moved and duly seconded to approve the officer's recommendation.

RESOLVED

To consult with existing licence holders on updated Holiday Caravan Site Licence conditions for a period of 8 weeks. Any relevant representations will be brought back to this committee for consideration. If there are no relevant representations, then site owners will receive written confirmation of the revised conditions that apply to their site.

County Councillor D Price returned to the meeting.

County Councillor G Williams left the meeting for other council business.

County Councillors E Vaughan and R Williams joined the meeting after experiencing technical difficulties.

8.	ANIMAL ESTABLISHMENT LICENSING FEES REVIEW
-----------	---------------------------------------------------

The Committee considered the report regarding Animal Establishment Licensing Fees.

The Committee noted that the trade had already been consulted regarding the proposed licensing fees and no objections had been received. Concerns were raised about unlicensed premises and what could be done about these. The Senior Enforcement Officer advised that in 2009 when this area of licensing was

taken over by the Authority there were 26 licensed premises and the Team had two whole time equivalent posts. Currently, there are 97 licensed premises and the Team has one whole time equivalent member in post. As a result, the Team can only react to strong intelligence received about possible unlicensed premises. The Committee noted that a number of people are under investigation and recently one person pleaded guilty to operating an unlicensed premise when taken to court.

It was moved and duly seconded to approve the officer's recommendation.

RESOLVED

To approve the proposed licence fees and implement them with effect from 1st April 2022.

In response to the issues raised about unlicensed premises the Chair agreed that the issue of enforcement would be discussed further by the Committee. In respect of a specific unlicensed premise raised by a member the Chair agreed to meet with him and the Senior Enforcement Officer and discuss it outside of this meeting.

County Councillor K Lewis (Chair)