

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 June 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:-

Cllr D A Flagg – Chairman

Cllr S Moore – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr B Castle, Cllr A Chapmanlaw, Cllr M Dower, Cllr G Farquhar,
Cllr A Filer, Cllr E Harman, Cllr P Hilliard, Cllr M Howell,
Cllr C Matthews, Cllr J Richardson and Cllr L Williams

9. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

10. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

11. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 24 May 2023 and the Licensing Sub Committees held on 28 April and 31 May 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

13. Public Issues

There were no public issues received for this meeting.

14. Consideration of amendments to the BCP Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy

The Head of Safer Communities presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Committee was asked to consider some recommended amendments to the current BCP Council Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy 2021, relating to the age of new or replacement vehicles at first licence and the maximum age of licensed vehicles. The BCP Taxi and Private Hire Trade Association had requested these amendments to support current licence holders who were experiencing difficulties in meeting current policy requirements, some of whom may decide to work in neighbouring licensing

authority areas where requirements were less restrictive. This matter had been considered at the Licensing Committee on 9 March 2023, following which officers met with trade representatives and discussed the issues in more depth.

The following amendments to the Policy were proposed:

- To amend paragraph 7.5 to read “All vehicles must be no more than 5 years of age from first registration with less than 60,000 miles and meet Euro 6 emission standard or higher”.
- To amend paragraph 7.6 to read “All WAVs must have no more than 100,000 miles on the clock and must meet euro 6 emission standard or higher (or other equivalent standard)”
- To delete paragraph 11.1 which states “From the date of this policy no licence will be issued for the renewal for any vehicle aged 15 years or older from the date for first registration” as no longer needed

These amendments would ensure the safety of licensed vehicles and increase the number of WAVs available, which currently stood at 60 vehicles. The Committee noted that there were approximately 300 vehicles (around 30%) which needed to be changed to the minimum Euro 6 standard by the end of the year. The Equality Impact Needs Assessment Panel had deemed the amendments as having a positive impact. The Head of Safer Communities and Licensing Officers clarified the following points in response to questions:

- The average mileage lifespan of a vehicle varied and depended in part on how well it had been looked after
- Vehicles were subject to strict checks twice a year at six month intervals, once by a standard MOT and once by an enhanced MOT at the BCP Depot which included a check of the interior.
- Larger operators with offices in neighbouring licensing authority areas could pass bookings on, however hackney carriage vehicles licensed elsewhere could not rank inside the BCP area.
- It was not possible to retrofit a pre-Euro 6 diesel car and the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme (CVRAS) was intended for larger, more commercial vehicles.

Committee members agreed that the proposed amendments set a high bar in terms of protecting the environment and ensuring passenger safety while striking the right balance with members of the licensed trade. It was noted that the amendments did not constitute a significant change to the policy, the proposals would have a positive impact for the travelling public and a positive financial impact on the trade, with no procedural impact or adverse impact on the community.

RESOLVED that the amendments as set out above and in paragraphs 20 to 22 of the report be agreed as recommended.

Voting: Unanimous

15. To consider the latest Hackney Carriage unmet needs survey

The Head of Safer Communities presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Committee was asked to consider whether to retain the current number of licenced hackney carriage vehicles as stated within the BCP Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy. The Council was required to carry out an unmet needs survey every three years to show there was no unmet need and thereby maintain its current restriction on the number of licences issued. The Policy allowed for up to 15 additional licences for WAVs only, to be issued each year in the respective Bournemouth and Poole zones (Christchurch having no restriction) up until 2025 when the Policy would be reviewed. As the most recent survey undertaken in 2023 demonstrated that there was no unmet needs, it was recommended to make no change to the Policy at this moment in time.

The Head of Safer Communities and Licensing Officers clarified the following points in response to questions:

- If there were no existing restrictions an unmet needs survey was not required to be done.
- The survey was carried out independently by one company using a standard methodology for all licensing authorities.
- Appendix 1 of the report provided further detail of the location of ranks surveyed, this took place in July, to account for any seasonal increase in demand, and October.
- Only three out of the additional licences available in Bournemouth and Poole had been issued, which was disappointing. It was hoped that the amendments to the policy agreed as a result of the preceding agenda item would encourage more take up in respect of WAVs.
- There was nothing to prevent the holder of a private hire vehicle licence from changing from a WAV to a saloon car.
- Unwanted plates were either returned to the licensing authority for reissue or transferred.

Committee members agreed that on the evidence presented there were no unmet needs in terms of licensed hackney carriage vehicles. Bearing in mind the current vehicle/driver ratio and some of the comments made in the survey it was acknowledged that there may be a need for more drivers and for their value to be recognised.

RESOLVED that the current number of licenced hackney carriage vehicles as stated within the BCP Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Policy be retained as there are no unmet needs identified in the unmet needs survey.

Voting: Unanimous

16. Forward Plan

The Committee considered the latest version of its Forward Plan, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Head of Safer Communities and the Legal Advisor gave the following updates in response to issues raised by the Committee:

- Pleasure Boats Policy – It was noted that larger vessels were licensed by the Maritime and Coastguard Authority, not the Council. The Committee asked if it was possible to bring forward this item ahead of the scheduled date of September 2024.
- Sex Establishment Policy – any decision on whether or not to have a policy would need to be considered by the Council's new Administration before any work was commenced on developing a policy.
- Statement of Licensing Policy – This was due to be renewed in 2025 so work to review the existing policy would commence next year.
- Prevention of Crime and Disorder Licensing Objective – in response to a concern about the lack of action taken to address the theft of alcohol from licensed premises it was agreed to bring a report to the September 2023 meeting.
- Pavement Licensing – it was confirmed that the Government was reviewing arrangements following the lifting of Covid restrictions. It was agreed to bring a report to the September 2023 meeting.
- Review of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Policy – in response to a concern about driver standards and the Council's approach to addressing behaviours, it was confirmed that such issues would be considered by the Committee as part of the review of the driver policy to be commenced next year.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan as updated be agreed.

The meeting ended at 11.18 am

CHAIR