

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 22 February 2022 at 7.00 pm**

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<b>Present:</b>	Councillors Gary Collins (Chair), Tony Fish (Vice-Chair), Chris Baker, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Shane Ralph, Kairen Raper, Sue Sammons and Graham Snell
<b>Apologies:</b>	Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Daniel Chukwu and Augustine Ononaji
<b>In attendance:</b>	Paul Adams, Licensing Manager Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **9. Minutes**

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 28 September 2021 were approved as a correct record subject.

### **10. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business.

### **11. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **12. CCTV in Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles**

The Licencing Manager presented the report as outlined within the agenda on pages 11 to 24.

The Chair of the Committee enquired as to whether sound recording would be available as part of the CCTV, as he felt this would be useful should a case be brought before a Sub-Committee. The Licencing Manager explained that sound recording was not permissible however within most taxis there was a panic button which could be used, if required in an emergency.

During discussions Members queried the cost of supplying such equipment and whether this would be chargeable to the taxi trade. It was explained that at present should a taxi driver have CCTV recording within their vehicle they were currently the data controller and would be responsible for the cost of the recording device. The Licencing Manager continued by explaining if the use of CCTV was to be part of the Council's policy, then the Council became the

data controller and with that cloud based software would be used to store data, on top of this devices would be required to be encrypted to allow maximum security and confidentiality.

It was queried as to whether there would be an ongoing cost of retention of the data from the CCTV devices, should the Council have the responsibility open the data controller. It was further asked how long the data was to be retained for. The Licencing Manager commented in addition to the costs for each unit there would be additional annual cost to the Council to maintain and administer the system as well as an additional staffing resource requirement within the Licencing Team of up to one full time post.

Councillor Maney enquired as to why the Council would be the data controller should Members agree to having CCTV as part of the taxi licencing policy. The Licencing Manager explained the statutory guidance was very clear in that should CCTV be made mandatory within Hackney carriage and Private Hire vehicles then Local Authorities were to be the data controller.

Councillor Sammons highlighted her concern as to the cost to the taxi trade should CCTV within taxi vehicles be made mandatory, especially following COVID-19 from which the trade were still struggling. The Licencing Manager sympathised agreeing that the local taxi trade was struggling to recruit following COVID-19 and any additional cost to them would be difficult.

Councillor Snell commented perhaps the installation and use of CCTV within vehicles could be beneficial for many taxi companies. He queried as to whether the Council would be able to offer incentives to companies who installed CCTV devices into vehicles themselves and would therefore be the data controller. The Licencing Manager advised that unfortunately there was no budget at present to offer an incentive to local taxi companies, however it was something which could be discussed with the Community Partnership Group.

Members enquired as to whether the Council would be offering training on GDPR should taxi companies or individual taxi licence holders install CCTV devices. The Licencing Manager advised this was not something which could be provided by the Licencing Department however he was happy to speak with the Information Department.

The Chair of the Committee brought Members attention to the recommendation of the report and enquired as to whether a third option should be made available whereby the Council offered help or advice to taxi licence holders.

The following recommendation was suggested:

*That the Licencing Committee agrees to keep in place the existing policy that the installation of CCTV in a licensed vehicle is at the discretion of the vehicle proprietor and ask Officers to go out to consultation with the local taxi trade, Essex Police and the Community Partnership Group to identify if there are*

*local circumstances which indicate that the installation of CCTV in vehicles would have either a positive or an adverse net effect on the safety of taxi and private hire vehicle users for further consideration by this committee.*

This was agreed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Licencing Committee agrees to keep in place the existing policy that the installation of CCTV in a licensed vehicle is at the discretion of the vehicle proprietor and ask Officers to go out to consultation with the local taxi trade, Essex Police and the Community Partnership Group to identify if there is a local need for CCTV in private hire vehicles.**

**13. Electric Private Hire Vehicles**

The Licencing Manager presented the report outlined within the agenda on pages 25 to 41.

During discussions it was mentioned there was a lack of charging points within the borough. The Licencing Manager explained that most electric vehicles on a full charge could travel 300 miles and that taxi companies would manage jobs, knowing where charging points within the borough were. He continued by stating there were several charging points within Thurrock and regarding this the borough was in a good position. Members heard how by agreeing to amend the Private Hire Vehicle pre-licencing standards to include electric vehicles as outlined within the report, would allow taxi companies with such vehicle's immense flexibility.

Councillor Liddiard stated he felt this was a good opportunity and should be encouraged. He continued by commenting the use of electric vehicles and the amendment of the Pre-Licensing Standard would raise the Council's overall Licencing Standards.

Councillor Maney stated he was pleased with the recommendation and that if agreed it would enable taxi companies to give passengers more choice when responding to calls.

Councillor Snell agreed with Councillor Maney and commentated that perhaps the Council should look at not only the use of electric vehicles but also smart cars for example. The Licencing Manager stated if this was the case taxi companies would have to have a range of adequate vehicles, so too meet the needs of all passengers be them single commuters or a family.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Licencing Committee agrees to amend the Private Hire Vehicle Pre-Licensing Standards to include the electric vehicle section as in section 3.3 of the report.**

**The meeting finished at 8.05 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

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