

Runnymede Borough Council

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

21 March 2018 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors Mrs J Gracey (Chairman), D W Parr (Vice-Chairman) Mrs D V Clarke and Mrs M T Harnden.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor S M Mackay

587. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Committee noted the Fire Precautions.

588. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 2 and 14 November 2017 were confirmed and signed as correct records.

589. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONVICTIONS POLICY AND THE INTRODUCTION OF SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR DRIVERS AND OPERATORS

The Committee received the results of the recent Surrey-wide consultation on proposed amendments to the Convictions Policy and the introduction of mandatory safeguarding training for drivers and holders of Operator licences.

Members were advised that 393 responses to the consultation had been received by the hosting authority, Reigate and Banstead. Of these, 17 came from Runnymede, comprising 11 from the taxi trade and 6 from members of the public.

Regarding the Surrey-wide Convictions policy there was strong support to have a policy where relevant convictions and timescales were included to assess whether an applicant was 'fit and proper.' Locally, 13 of the 17 responses had agreed, 1 disagreed and the remainder didn't know. This was the same for the policy not to grant a licence to those banned from working with children and vulnerable adults. However, it was not thought appropriate to introduce a blanket ban for certain convictions. Instead, the phrase 'normally would be refused' has been used in the policy.

Officers reported that a number of respondents thought that common assault should be treated more leniently. However, Officers did not agree and the Committee concurred that this should remain in the 10 year category.

With regard to the introduction of mandatory training on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and safeguarding for new drivers, Members noted there was more support amongst the general public than from the trade. Across Surrey those in favour was 69% and 64% respectively for new and existing driver training. However only 41% of the trade supported the proposals. Locally, 10 of the 17 agreed, including 6 drivers, 3 disagreed, 2 did not know and 2 did not answer the question. For existing drivers to undergo training, 7 drivers disagreed it should be introduced, 2 did not answer and the remaining 8 agreed, including 2 existing drivers.

Officers advised and the Committee agreed that although the proposals for training were less supported by the Trade, in the interests of public safety it would be adopted.

A revised version of the policy was reviewed by Members and clarification was provided in respect of other bodies that Officers would share information with as a 'reliable source' when considering applications. A list was included in the policy.

Having received a summary of what the training covered, Members viewed some of the training on-line which had been procured from Barnardo's, the chosen training provider. Officers highlighted the training that had been tailor made to be relevant to the taxi trade and covered both CSE and vulnerable adults. It was clarified that the training would probably take each driver no more than 45 minutes to complete, after which they would need to produce a certificate for the Licensing team to record that they had completed the training.

Existing drivers would be advised as soon as the training was available and they would have a year from 1 April 2018 to complete the training free of charge. New drivers would have to pay approximately £15 each, the figure would be confirmed when available.

The Committee fully endorsed the training, noting that at the last taxi forum some drivers were in favour of the training becoming a requirement nationwide. Officers were asked to send the Committee a link to the training as they agreed they would like to be informed of what was expected of the drivers and holders of operators licences. All the Licensing team had already taken the training and there would be letters going out to the trade (227 drivers and 23 holders of operators licences) shortly which would be followed up by reminders. Officers would know when training had been completed by way of regular online notifications from Barnardo's.

Members were advised that a degree of trust was needed in the absence of sufficient resources to organise training for all the existing and new drivers. Officers were alive to potential difficulties enforcing the policy and in the event a review was necessary, this would take place across the county, co-ordinated by Tandridge District Council which was the lead authority in Surrey.

Members discussed the proposed penalty points system, which Officers confirmed was not being adopted by Runnymede at this time. There were insufficient staffing resources to operate such a system and Officers did not consider it was currently warranted.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the amended version of the Hackney carriage and Private Hire Licensing Convictions Policy be approved; and**
- ii) the requirement for all existing taxi drivers, private hire drivers and operators to undertake mandatory CSE training by 1 May 2019, be approved.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.56pm)