

Cherwell District Council

General Licensing Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the General Licensing Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 15 April 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor John Willett
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Robert Parkinson (In place of Councillor Nick Cotter)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Ian Middleton (Chair)

Officers:

Jan Southgate, Health Protection, Compliance & Licensing Manager
Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Christine Pegler, Lead Licensing Enforcement Officer
Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services

1

Appointment of Chairman for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024-25

This being the first meeting of the newly created General Licensing Committee, the Democratic and Elections Officer opened the meeting and called for nominations for the appointment of Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2024-25.

It was proposed by Councillor Parkinson and seconded by Councillor Coton that Councillor Middleton be elected Chairman of the Licensing Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2024-2025.

There were no further nominations.

The Democratic and Elections Officer advised the Councillor Middleton had confirmed he would accept the appointment if appointed in his absence.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Middleton be appointed Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

2 **Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the remainder of Municipal Year 2024-25**

It was proposed by Councillor Parkinson and seconded by Councillor Crichton that Councillor Biegel be elected Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2024-25.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Biegel be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

Having been appointed Vice-Chairman and in the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

5 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 18 January 2023, 23 May 2023 and 22 May 2024 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

6 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

New Cherwell District Council Taxi Licensing Policy

The Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager submitted a report which presented a draft Taxi Licensing Policy for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire for consultation and agreement with the public and trade.

In introducing the report the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager explained that the current Taxi Licensing policy had been published in 2023 and the Council was committed to reviewing the policy at least every five years to ensure it reflected current legislation and guidance. The review of the current policy introduced changes to reflect the latest Department for Transport guidance which had been published in November 2023 and made improvements to safety, further encouraged the adoption of cleaner vehicles and accessibility for wheelchair access

In considering the report, Committee members sought clarification on a number of aspects of the policy. Regarding the wording that defined activities that would lead to the suspension or revocation of a license, the Committee was advised it was difficult to have an exhaustive list but officers had the tools to take enforcement action where appropriate.

It was confirmed that the definition of assistance dogs also included emotional support animals, the Committee was advised that under disability legislation this would be the case.

Regarding the possibility of providing a list of British Sign Language interpreters to taxi drivers, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager agreed to investigate this further.

In respect of the appeal process following the revocation of a taxi license, the Committee was advised that the process considered how the decision had been reached rather than the decision itself, any appeals would be heard at a Magistrates' Court.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the mechanism for ensuring that taxi license applicants had made full disclosure, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager explained that all drivers would have an enhanced DBS check at the time of application and a minimum of every six months during their licensed period. Although there was not a formal mechanism for obtaining information from the police, there were other channels of communication available where required.

In response to a query regarding the potential impact of the draft policies on the future level of supply of taxis and private hire vehicles in the Cherwell district and the effect this would have on pricing for customers, the Committee was advised that the trade in services was currently healthy and that officers had tried to take in to account the burden the new requirements would place on drivers' costs when creating the draft policy.

In response to a Committee request for the inclusion of first aid kits in vehicles, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager agreed to add this requirement to the draft policy.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to inclusion of the points of clarification raised, the new draft Cherwell District Council Taxi Licensing Policy be approved for consultation with the trade and members of the public.

The meeting ended at 7.18 pm

Chair:

Date: