

Minutes

of the Virtual Meeting of

The Licensing Committee

Tuesday, 9 March 2021

Virtual meeting via Teams

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am

Meeting Concluded: 10.43 am

Councillors:

Robert Payne (Chairman)

Caroline Cherry

Andy Cole

John Crockford-Hawley

Ann Harley

Nicola Holland

Stuart McQuillan

Marcia Pepperall

Mike Solomon

James Tonkin

Roz Willis

Apologies: Councillors: James Clayton and Hugh Gregor.

Absent: Councillors Ian Parker.

Officers in attendance: Caz Horton (Licensing Officer), Sioux Isherwood (Principal Environmental Protection & Licensing Officer), Sara Saunders (Solicitor and Senior Legal Advisor), Michele Chesterman (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer) and Mike Riggall (Information and ICT Security Manager).

LIC Chairman's Welcome 15

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the second virtual meeting of the Licensing Committee.

LIC Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37 as 16 amended by SO 7A) (Agenda Item 3)

None

LIC Minutes 03 November 2019 (Agenda Item 4) 17

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

LIC 18 End of year report for the administration and enforcement of all licensing regimes (Agenda Item 6)

The Director of Public Health and Regulatory Services reported on the administration and enforcement of all licensing regimes undertaken by the council.

The Principal Environmental Protection and Licensing Officer presented her report, which detailed the Licensing activities undertaken within the financial year 2020/21 in relation to the functions and responsibilities carried out by the North Somerset Licensing Team. The report noted ongoing pressures and difficulties experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report further noted that the current Statement of Licensing Policy was due for review, with Home Office guidance permitting a delay in starting the formal consultation until 2021 in light of the resource pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Members noted that the emerging picture of the night time economy, and the future hospitality industry in general, would take some time to recover following the extended periods of lockdown and restrictions that many businesses had faced. As the current policy was still fit for purpose, using the available resource to support the current premises back to operation and compliance was seen as a priority and would also allow time to take a more aspirational approach to any revised content. It was proposed that the next few months be used to collate ideas and data to inform a revised version which would be presented to the Committee at the mid-year review in November 2021.

The Principal Environmental Protection and Licensing Officer highlighted areas already identified for review to members and requested that members consider any additional areas of concern. The Licensing Team was under pressure and busy with continual changes to the Covid regulations and changes to licensing legislation. There was a requirement to consider the changes to the taxi policy in line with the statutory guidance from the Department of Transport.

With the continued resource pressures during the present Coronavirus pandemic the revised Sexual entertainment venue policy was still in formulation. There was currently only one sexual entertainment venue in the district which had remained closed since March 2020 and no new applications had been submitted to date. The revision of this policy was therefore seen as low priority currently and would now take place in early 2022.

The Department for Transport statutory standards for Local Authorities were issued in 2020 in relation to the Hackney and Private Hire licensing regimes. Details of the new standards were outlined to members at the last meeting in November 2020. It was noted that additional measures needed to be introduced and an interim revision of the policy to note these ahead of the next full policy review in 2023. An interim revision of the Council's Taxi & Private Hire policy had been drafted accordingly and was attached as Appendix B of the report. The first online applications under the new process were being trialled with the aim of starting the new policy with effect from 1 April 2021.

Members noted that operators and their dispatch and booking staff would be required to undergo a safeguarding awareness session. The Taxi Compliance Officer would be delivering the training and members of the Committee were

invited to attend. In addition, it was agreed that the Principal Environmental Protection and Licensing Officer convene an informal virtual meeting with members of the Licensing Committee to discuss the best practice that was being shared through partnership working with other local authority licensing departments and agencies.

The Principal Environmental Protection and Licensing Officer answered members' queries in relation to criminal convictions; basic and enhanced DBS checks; the weight given to a Chief Constable's comments on DBS applications versus criminal convictions; the policy detail relating to newer electric, lower emission vehicles; written, reading and oral testing of drivers; safeguarding of children and vulnerable persons; the robustness of training, the clarification of the term 'natural justice' and sharing best practice with other local authority licensing departments and agencies. A Member asked for the clarification in relation to drivers with serious motoring offences and drug offences and it was agreed that the policy would be re-worded to indicate that if revoked whilst holding a licence with North Somerset then no further licence would be entertained.

Resolved:

- (1) that the updates regarding the Licensing provision and policy updates be noted;
- (2) that the changes to the Taxi & Private Hire Policy in light of statutory guidance be noted and
- (3) that the formulation of a revised Licensing Act statement of policy (informed by local issues as restrictions ease) be noted with a view to agreeing a draft policy at the next Licensing Committee hearing.

Chairman
