

Licensing Committee

Tuesday, 5th September, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor B Selby in the Chair

Councillors N Buckley, R Downes, J Dunn,
B Flynn, M Harland, G Hyde, A Khan,
G Wilkinson, A Garthwaite, K Groves and
J Pryor

39 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

40 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the nature of the business to be considered.

41 Late Items

The Chair referred to the Licensing Committee Night Time Patrol of the City Centre scheduled to take place on Friday 8th September 2017.

It was reported that Inspector Berriman was unavailable on the scheduled date but was keen to be in attendance if Members would be willing to consider one of the following alternative dates:

- Friday 15th September
- Saturday 16th September
- Friday 6th October
- Saturday 7th October.

RESOLVED – That the visit be re-scheduled to Friday 6th October 2017 commencing at 10.15pm and the necessary invitations be issued accordingly.

42 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests made at the meeting.

43 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: S McKenna and C Townsley.

44 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1st August 2017, were accepted as a true and correct record.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 4th October, 2017

45 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no issues raised under Matter Arising.

46 Taxi and Private Hire Enforcement Update

The Head of Elections, Licensing and Registration submitted a report which provided an update on taxi and private hire licensing activity and enforcement priorities.

The Executive Officer, Taxi and Private Hire Licensing presented the report and together with representatives from West Yorkshire Police addressed the following issues:

- The detection of plying for hire and touting continued to be a priority
- There were more “out of town/ cross border” vehicles operating in Leeds
- There was now more cross border working with other local authorities including joint training and the creation of a database of over 500 “out of town/cross border vehicles observations”
- Late September would see the introduction of two specialist police officers to work with TPHL enforcement on Friday/ Saturday nights using two high visibility police vehicles and having access to automated number plate recognition systems
- Improved information sharing with the Police and Safer Leeds in respect of disclosure arrangements
- The promotion of good taxi awareness in the city, via a web page, including how to lodge a complaint
- The introduction of a new complaints recording system, allowing monitoring of trends and improved analytical reporting
- 660 compliance inspections undertaken in a six month period
- Planned enforcement activity

The issue of out of town vehicles was raised, one Member suggesting that he had witnessed on at least three separate occasions vehicles with out of town plates parked up on Aire Street, it was queried if the drivers could be prosecuted?

In responding the Executive Officer said out of town drivers could be prosecuted if observed plying for hire but could not be suspended. Daytime enforcement within the city centre was difficult because the enforcement teams were not on patrol until 8.00pm

Members queried if the vehicle insurance became invalid if the vehicle was involved in an accident which was outside the Local Authority area where the vehicle was registered.

In responding officers suggested that the vehicle insurance may not become invalid, as a minimum the vehicle would usually have third party coverage.

Referring to the increase in the number of out of town vehicles, Members queried if there were a sufficient number of Enforcement Officers to carry out the necessary checks.

In responding, officers reported that the Police were shortly to provide further resources which would assist enforcement operations, there was also a vacant post for a TPHL Enforcement Officer and this was currently been pursued.

Referring to paragraph 3.11 of the submitted report, Members queried if there were any issues around taxi drivers refusing to take passengers who were been assisted by a Guide Dog.

Officers reported that of the 401 complaints received only 3-4 related to access issues (wheel chair accessible vehicles). It was reported that joint working with Guide Dogs for the Blind had taking place in early 2017 using a telephone test purchase operation to ensure compliance with the Equalities Act 2010. It was noted that currently there was only one driver who had a medical exception to transporting a passenger who was accompanied by a guide dog.

Referring to the number of complaints received (401 in a 7 month period), it was suggested by one Member that, that figure represented a very small percentage given there were 60,000 journeys per month.

The Chair said the figures quoted demonstrated how safe it was to travel by taxi in Leeds.

Members suggested this was a positive endorsement for the trade and should be promoted accordingly.

Members welcomed the promotion of good taxi awareness scheme as referred to in section 3.5 of the submitted report. It was also suggested by Members that drivers should encourage passengers to occupy seats in the rear of the taxi to avoid potential safeguarding issues, such advice to be incorporated within drivers training.

The Chair made reference to the consequences of de-regulation and reminded Members of the letter that had been previously sent to the appropriate Minister responsible together with all Leeds Members of Parliament calling for more robust and national licensing and enforcement of taxis (hackney carriages) and private hire vehicles, drivers and operators.

In providing an update the Head of Elections, Licensing and Registration said that a Private Member's Bill was currently progressing through Parliament "Licensing of Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill 2017-19". It was reported that the Bill had had its 1st reading on 19th July 2017 with the 2nd reading scheduled for 2nd February 2018.

The Chair suggested to Members that in their discussions with Leeds MPs they should be encouraging those MPs to support the Bill.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To support the Council's Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Enforcement activity

- (iii) To welcome and promote how safe it was to travel by taxi in Leeds
- (iv) That all Leeds MPs be encouraged to support “Licensing of Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill 2017-19” currently progressing through Parliament

47 Leeds City Centre Evening & Night Time Economy

The Head of Elections, Licensing and Registration submitted a report which provided an overview of the partnership working arrangements and improvements within the city centre evening and night time economy in support of the licensing objectives and Purple Flag accreditation.

The Chair welcomed representatives of the Purple Flag Partnership which included: West Yorkshire Police, Leeds BID, Business Against Crime in Leeds (BACIL) West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), LCC Public Health, LCC City Centre Management, LCC Entertainment Licensing and LCC Taxi & Private Hire Licensing.

Addressing the report the Section Head, Entertainment Licensing reminded Members that in January 2017 the City was awarded Purple Flag status for the management of the evening and night-time economy. Purple Flag is a town and city centre award which aims to raise the standard and broaden the appeal of town and city centres between the hours of 17:00 & 05:00.

It was reported that Purple Flag was assessed annually. The accreditation addresses key themes: Wellbeing, Movement, Appeal, Policy Envelope and Place. Sub groups had been established to lead on each theme, enabling the progress of actions by October 2017 in line with the renewal date.

Partnership representatives addressed the Committee providing an update on the following issues:

- Police Resourcing in the City Centre
- Counter Terrorism threat
- Crime statistics
- Funding obtained for a Street Ambassador Service
- The intention to create a team of trainers to deliver Safeguarding Training in all aspect of evening and night-time entertainment

- Alcohol and drug campaigns
- The continued marketing and promotion of the city centre
- Movement – arrival and departure of people into/ out of the city centre, looking at public transport, car parking provision, pedestrian routes, crowd management and the level of information available to users.

One Member queried if rough sleepers/ begging was a particular issue.

In responding it was suggested that many rough sleepers/beggars led chaotic lifestyles (alcohol/ drug issues). It was noted that currently 12 individuals were on criminal behaviour orders.

One Member expressed the view that to exclude beggars/ rough sleepers out of the city centre would not solve the problem, alternative solutions had to be found.

The Chair referred to the large number of people employed as part of the evening and night time economy and queried how these people travelled to and from work; car, bus or train and were these services reliable in the late evening.

In responding Officers from LCC City Centre Management and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority suggested that many employees would use public transport including park & ride but accepted bus and rail providers would not operate a full night service unless there was demand for such a service.

One Member suggested that the smaller bus operators be approached to deliver a night time service.

Commenting on the issue of service reliability Members were made aware of the “Bus 18 initiative” which was launched on 24th March 2017.

Operated by First West Yorkshire, Arriva Yorkshire and Transdev, under the Bus 18 Customer Promise, members of the public unhappy with their journey could claim a free travel voucher.

In addition, if the last bus did not arrive within 20 minutes of the scheduled time, the cost of a taxi may be reclaimed upon production of a receipt.

Members welcomed the initiative suggesting it had not been widely publicised and asked if further details could be supplied to the Committee.

The representative from WYCA gave an undertaking that the requested information would be supplied.

Members made reference to a number of areas in the city centre where streets had been closed off to allow bars/ restaurants/cafés to extend their outside space.

Officers from City Centre Management confirmed that Merrion Street (East) and Greek Street had been closed to vehicular traffic to allow new entertainment areas to be developed which had been welcomed by visitors to the city centre and was seen as a positive development by the Business Community.

It was reported that in providing such facilities measures had been introduced to minimise risk to the public.

Members welcomed the safeguarding training and the alcohol and drug campaigns suggesting it would lead to good partnership working if all parties were willing to engage.

One Member referred to Shisha smoking particular in the Lincoln Green, Roseville Road areas and asked if the situation could be monitored.

In responding officers confirmed that whilst shisha smoking was not a licensable activity, officers would continue to work in association with partner agencies.

The Chair thanked all representatives for their attendance and contributions commenting that it had been a very worthwhile discussion.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note and welcome the partnership working arrangements within city centre evening and night time economy in support of the licensing objectives and Purple Flag accreditation.
- (ii) That details of the “Bus 18 Customer Promise” be circulated to Members for information

48 Policing and the Night Time Economy

Members received a Presentation from Sergeant Dave Shaw, West Yorkshire Police, who spoke about Policing and the night time economy.

Sergeant Shaw reported at as a result of closer partnership working associated with a number of initiatives attributed to the Purple Flag award, there were currently no premises within the City Centre Cumulative Impact Area which were a cause of concern.

The Chair thanked Sergeant Shaw for his attendance and presentation commenting that the session had been informative and interesting.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the presentation be noted
- (ii) That a further presentation on policing and the night time economy be scheduled for March 2018.

49 Licensing Committee Work Programme 2017/18

RESOLVED – To approve the contents of the Licensing Committee Work Programme for 2017/18

50 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 4th October 2017 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds.