



TAXI AND GENERAL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, PENALLTA HOUSE ON THURSDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER 2018 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT

Councillor D.W.R. Preece – Chair

Councillors:

J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, W. David, M. Davies, K. Etheridge, Ms J. Gale, D.C. Harse,
J. Ridgewell, J.E. Roberts, R. Whiting and W. Williams

Together with:

J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), L. Morgan (Licensing
Manager), S. Mock (Solicitor), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Cushing, Mrs D. Price and J. Simmonds (Vice-Chair).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3 ALTERNATIVE PROCESS FOR ONLINE CHECKING OF DVLA DRIVER LICENCES IN RELATION TO DRIVERS OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Licensing Manager presented the report, which set out proposals to amend the process for checking DVLA driving licence information and the associated condition of licence for Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Vehicle Drivers.

Members were advised of the current process where the Authority carries out online checking of existing licensed drivers and new applicants' licences via the Driver Licence Check (DLC) service, in order to ensure suitability to hold Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Vehicle Driver's licences in line with current policies and requirements. However, it was explained that due to the withdrawal of the DLC system by the DVLA (effective 1st December 2018), an alternative method of verifying suitability and driving fitness was needed.

The Licensing Manager explained that some local authorities have entered into agreements

with a third party provider, which require similar mandates to that of the DLC being signed and costs passed on to applicants. As a result of exploration by the Council to seek an alternative cost-free solution, the report proposed that future checks be made using the free online 'View or share your driving licence information' service which can be accessed via the GOV.UK website. This means that from December 2018 new and existing applicants would be required to share a one off generated code for the Licensing Authority to check their driver status without charge. The code can be generated by applicants ahead of their appointment or during the actual appointment to apply for or renew a vehicle driver licence. Officers will be able to offer this IT assistance to prospective applicants or existing drivers if needed.

It was noted that a letter had been sent to the taxi trade informing them of the reason for the change and inviting any comments on the proposal. In general, the trade were receptive to the proposal due to the lack of cost being incurred by its applicants/drivers, and therefore no adverse comments had been received in this regard.

The Committee were advised that should they be minded to agree to the proposal, then the Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Vehicle Driver's conditions of licence and Policy would need to be amended to reflect the change, namely in respect of Condition 3. The extract from the Policy showing the existing condition, together with the proposed revised Condition 3, was set out at Appendix A of the report.

During the course of the ensuing debate, Officers provided clarification on the use of the GOV.UK free on-line checking system and gave assurances as to the uniqueness, security, and ease of use of the system. A Member asked why the Council were withdrawing the £5.00 charge previously levied to applicants when completing the DLC mandate, and expressed a need to maintain this revenue stream given the level of budget savings required by the Authority. Officers explained that this nominal charge is being withdrawn as the new system is a free national service, which eliminates the administration costs encountered by the Licensing Section under the DLC system.

A Member queried why some other local authorities had entered into third-party agreements instead of taking up the free service. It was explained that each authority is adopting the process that best meets their individual requirements, and that in addition to Caerphilly Council, many other local authorities have chosen to take up the free online service as the preferred option for driver licence checks.

It was noted that the existing licence renewal letter to drivers would be revised to set out instructions relating to the on-line checking service. In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that any driving offences incurred after the online check is conducted must be reported to the Licensing Section.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be approved. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the use of the free online 'View or share your driving licence information' service in place of the current Driver Licence Check (DLC) system be implemented with effect from 1st December 2018;
- (ii) the current Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driver's condition of licence and policy be amended as set out in Appendix A of the report to accommodate the above change.

The meeting closed at 10.42 a.m.