

**LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
3 FEBRUARY 2022
7.30 - 8.36 PM**



Present:

Councillors Porter (Chair), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Atkinson, Dr Barnard, Bidwell, Brown, Brunel-Walker, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs Ingham, Kirke and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Leake

25. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

27. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

28. Notice of Public Speaking

There were no applications or public speaking.

29. Update on Environmental Health and Trading Standards

Sean Murphy, Public Protection Manager presented an update on the work in Environmental Health and Trading Standards in the PPP and drew attention to the following key areas.

In Trading Standards, the current priorities were around doorstep crime, scams and online fraud, food standards, underage sales, counterfeiting, unsafe consumer goods and fly-tipping.

In Environmental Health, the current priorities were around food safety, health and safety in the workplace, private sector housing standards, domestic and commercial nuisance, animal warden service, caravan sites, supporting the Planning process, and air quality.

The services were looking ahead to plan for work around construction products, implementing measures controlling the sale of knives, supporting the economic recovery and 'Levelling Up' agenda, supporting the green agenda and associated emerging markets, and any deregulation or regulatory changes.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Officers worked with other areas in Contract Services to identify the source of any fly-tipped waste. Mobile CCTV was also available to be used in fly-tipping hotspots.
- Effective work around proxy sales and test purchasing was in place, and elements of safeguarding were embedded in retailer training to encourage appropriate safeguarding referrals to be made if a concern was raised. Sean agreed that there was more to be done to support premises in recognising the signs of possible exploitation and modern slavery, and where to refer any concerns.
- Officers attended a monthly meeting with the Community Safety team to review any problem premises in the borough and problem individuals.
- The Public Protection Partnership were supporting businesses with a positive approach to new regulations in light of the levelling up agenda and establishing effective signposting for those businesses which required more support.
- Sean offered to attend the Climate Change Action Plan to present the Public Protection Partnership's work on air quality, energy performance and green energy.
- Signage and banners had been installed at dog fouling hotspots, and local schools had been asked to send in designs for the banners. Members were asked to let the Public Protection Partnership know of any dog fouling areas which should be addressed.
- There was nothing to prevent the display of knives for domestic use, but the law was strict on the sale of knives. Officers had found very high levels of compliance with underage test purchases of knives.
- The Public Protection Partnership were involved in housing standards through the licensing of HMOs, and some caravan sites. It was noted that there was now a 'fit and proper' test for caravan site owners. Officers did some work around bad private landlords but recognised that the majority of landlords were responsible. Any tenants with issues with a private rented sector landlord could contact the Public Protection Partnership.
- It was requested that the Air Quality project officer could present their work to Crowthorne Parish Council.
- Members asked the Public Protection Partnership to look into a shared reporting app for all issues, such as Fix My Street, rather than a designated app for fly-tipping.

30. **Fees for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles and Operators - Consultation Feedback**

Julia O'Brien presented the Fees for Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles and Operators report.

The fees had gone out to consultation, and had been promoted by physical signage, on websites and sent individually to all operators. A number of responses had been received.

Members were reminded that many of the fees had decreased, largely due to the automated system being installed in the service which would benefit the trade.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Officers had met with West Berkshire's HR department who delivered the DBS checks for drivers and had negotiated a cost reduction to £79.
- Drivers were encouraged to sign up for the DBS update service within 30 days of the certificate being issued to save £13 per year in subsequent years.

- An enhanced DBS check cost £40, but all providers would charge an admin fee on top of this. Members queried the admin fee and suggested that a breakdown of the associated costs in the admin fee would help drivers to understand the reason for it.
- It was noted that previous DBS' obtained through Bracknell Forest should have had a greater admin fee charged, however this had not been charged.
- The age of vehicle policy would be addressed in a new taxi policy which would be presented to the June Committee meeting.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 The comments received during the statutory consultation on variations to operators and vehicle licence fees as set out in Annex B to the report be noted.
- 2 Any amendments to the proposed operators and vehicle licence fees, as set out in Annex A, arising from the consultation be considered.
- 3 Full Council be recommended to adopt the fees, with or without modification, as part of the annual fee setting process and that these fees come into effect as of the 01 April 2022.

31. **Taxi Liaison Update**

Moira Fraser presented an update on the recent Taxi Liaison meeting which had been well attended.

The trade had indicated that they were likely to put forward a business case on tariffs, which would be brought to the June Committee meeting prior to statutory consultation.

Trade representatives had also discussed the fees, which had generally decreased in the coming financial year.

Enforcement colleagues had attended the meeting to update on parking offences on taxi ranks. There had been 241 recorded visits since July 2021 and 18 Fixed Penalty Notices issued of which 14 had been paid. Highways Officers were looking to improve signage on taxi ranks and to repaint lines where required. They were also looking into amending their processes which would mean they would be able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices without the need to append them to a windscreen.

It was noted that there was an Overview & Scrutiny group currently meeting to look at integrated enforcement more widely.

The next taxi liaison group had been scheduled for June 2022, and another meeting had been arranged for October.

In response to questions, it was noted that enforcement officers were looking into whether it was possible to report parking offences by uploading a photo of the offence at the start of their procedure.

The Chairman thanked officers for their help in the liaison meeting and welcomed the improving relationship between the Council and the trade.

32. **Forward Plan**

The forward plan was noted.

CHAIRMAN