

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the following meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee be taken as read and signed by the relevant Chairmen as a correct record:

- (i) 2 October 2008;
- (ii) 6 November 2008;
- (iii) 4 December 2008;
- (iv) 5 February 2009; and
- (v) 5 March 2009.

24. QUALITY TAXI PARTNERSHIPS

The Committee received a presentation from Andrew James, the Transport Strategy Officer at Essex County Council on Quality Taxi Partnerships (QTP). The QTP works with various agencies including the fire and rescue services who endorsed the partnership aims. The QTP also works with a resources consultant, marketing (publicising the work of the Quality Taxi Partnership), the Essex Police, the local councils and of course the Taxi firms and drivers.

The QTP works to the government's National Indicators of NI 7 relating to an 'Environment for a Thriving Third Sector' and NI 141 on 'Number of People attaining independent living'.

The Committee noted that the aims of the QTP were to promote accessibility to everyday facilities for all; to meet the needs of people without access to a car; to reduce crime and the fear of crime on the transport system; to improve the quality and quantity of transport services for all; to support services for people who cannot use conventional services and to reduce road traffic collisions that cause death and serious injury.

The QTP also wanted to improve working relationships and understanding between partners; to provide priority access where possible through the districts; to make taxi journeys as safe as they could be; to improve the customer care skills of drivers and controllers; the improvement of on-street waiting facilities for customers and to assist in the development of locally deliverable training packages.

The QTP were not asking for any money from this council to participate in the partnership as they had access to their own funding. They were looking for our agreement and would help this council with any problems such as environmental issues or putting in taxi waiting shelters. They could ask that all drivers undertake training up to NVQ standards giving a common knowledge background to all drivers. Currently, in Essex, there are over a thousand drivers undertaking this type of training. The Partnership had recently put in a taxi lay-by and shelter for Basildon council at no expense to them. The Partnership has now got about £40,000 left to spend from an initial £50,000 budget at the beginning of the year.

The Chairman then opened the meeting up to questions from the members.

Q: What was the difference between a black taxi cab and a mini cab under QTP?

A: The Council could use the QTP to apply minimum standards if they so wished. They could improve the standard of driving for new or existing drivers if they so wished.

Q: Is the customer of the QTP the taxi driver?

A: The Council is the customer along with the Taxi driver as well as the members of the public who use them. QTP is part of trying to improve public transport. They were also there to reduce crime and the fear of crime. At present they were helping Basildon to install CCTV cameras into taxis; this would help the driver and the customer.

Q: How will this scheme help the person in the street and how will they know it's a QTP cab?

A: The partnership could do marketing on behalf of the taxis that are part of the agreement; they could put information on the website or produce posters. They could produce certificates and put adverts in the papers promoting QTP's taxis. They would also like to put in a "passenger charter" into each vehicle.

Q: Is the QTP for every taxi or is it voluntary?

A: The scheme is voluntary at present. It will help taxis in the long run when QTP is widely publicised. The QTP badge can go onto the taxis to identify them.

Q: Would QTP membership be required for applicants of new licences.

A: It could be made a condition; this could be discussed with the trade bodies. Other authorities have done this.

Q: What about existing taxi drivers?

A: Other authorities have given existing drivers two years to get their NVQs.

Q: Can officers put the number of complaints received about taxi cabs into some sort of context.

A: There are on average about five complaints received per week.

Councillor Cohen said that this duplicates the item further on in the agenda about taxi licensing consultation. Should not the Committee consider this item before it decides about the QTP. This was agreed.

RESOLVED:

To consider the taxi licensing consultation paper in conjunction with the Quality Taxi Partnership paper.

25. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL TAXI LICENSING CONSULTATION

The Assistant Director Legal Service introduced the report on Taxi Licensing Consultation. Part of this was that they had explored the possibility of hackney carriage or private hire vehicles drivers be required to undertake a knowledge test, but this had largely been superseded by satellite navigations systems. They had looked into ways a test could be set up, either by using a computer based test system or by setting their own test questions. If they did this they would need to employ one person for one day a week to administer the tests. Either way, about £3,500 would be needed, either for a computer test system or to employ a part time worker. It should also be noted that currently there was a recruitment ban imposed.

Councillor Wyatt was sorry to see that the knowledge test was not recommended as it would also help test the driver's communication skills.

Councillor Mrs McEwen asked if the Quality Taxi Partnership covered the knowledge test. She was told that QTP recommended a competency test and not a knowledge test. Asked if this test would cost the Council anything, she was told that it would not.

Councillor Cohen asked how many (approximately) licence renewals were carried out per year. He was told there were about 550 renewals per year.

Councillor Cohen commented that the fee charged for the renewals might cover the cost for a knowledge test. He was told that the service was currently self financing so the cost would have to be put up proportionally to fund a test.

Councillor Mrs Gadsby said that she wanted to have a knowledge and a competency test; she thought that it was important.

Councillor Cohen thought that officers should go and try to fit the consultation report in with the Quality Taxi Partnership proposal and bring a new merged report to the next full meeting of the Committee, in October. The Assistant Director Legal Service asked that they also include disable access and to include information about the QTP on the council's website. The Committee agreed to this proposal.

RESOLVED:

1. That officers consider the Consultation report and the Quality Taxi Partnership proposals, taking into account the issues of disable access and deployment of information on the Council's website and merge the two into one report and make recommendations accordingly; and that
2. This report to be submitted to the October 2009 meeting of the Licensing Committee.

26. DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACE ORDERS

The Safer Communities Manager, Caroline Wiggins, introduced the report on Designated Public Place Orders (DPPO). The Committee were looking at using new powers to declare certain areas where restrictions on the public drinking of alcohol would apply. A local authority can make a DPPO in respect of a public place where this is evidence of nuisance or annoyance to members of the public associated with consuming alcohol in that place. In this case the two areas in question were:

- 1) Stonards Hill Recreation Ground, Epping, including the car park, Scout Hut, Jack Silley Pavillion car park, tennis courts, football stand and ground; and
- 2) Lower Swaines playing fields, Epping, including the public footpath running along the boundary of St Johns School from Lower Swaines to Bury Lane, the garages behind 2 Lower Swaines and public land and highway extending from St Johns School outside numbers 2 to 18 and 1 to 43 Lower Swaines.

Both areas were shown highlighted on updated maps that were tabled at the meeting. These differed slightly from the maps printed in the agenda.

The Committee noted that the DPPO did not stop everyone from drinking in the designated areas but only in association with anti-social behaviour. Once in place, the Police can use their confiscation powers to enforce the restriction.

Councillor Cohen commented that the DPPO seemed to be a poor relation to a dispersal order. Mrs Wiggins said that not all young people caused trouble;

sometimes they just met in groups and did not cause any problems. This order gave the Police discretion and was only to be used in relation to any anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Mrs Smith said that the order had just gone through a consultation process, what would happen to it now? Mrs Wiggins said that they had to advertise it in the local press, if there were no responses they would then place a more informative advert in the press identifying the place and date it would come into effect.

Councillor Mrs Smith asked how the order would be reviewed in the coming years. Mrs Wiggins said they would monitor police reports and contact local residents if they had seen any improvements.

It was noted that if any representations were made after the initial consultation process and they could not be resolved, officer would bring a further report to the Committee for a decision as to whether or not to proceed with the DPPO. Councillor Cohen proposed that this be delegated to the next available Sub-committee to save time having to wait for the next full meeting of the committee. This was seconded by Councillor Wyatt and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That Designated Public Place Orders be made in respect of the following areas:
 - i) Stonards Hill Recreation Ground, Epping, including the car park, Scout Hut, Jack Silley Pavilion car park, tennis courts, football stand and ground, as shown edged red on Plan No: 1 (attached).
 - ii) Lower Swaines playing fields, Epping, including the public footpath running along the boundary of St Johns School from Lower Swaines to Bury Lane. Garages behind 2 Lower Swaines and public land and highway extending from St Johns School outside numbers 2 – 18 and 1 – 43 Lower Swaines, as shown edged red on Plan No: 2 (attached)
2. That all necessary public notices be published in accordance with the legislation to enable the Designated Public Place Orders to take effect.
3. That in the event that representations opposing the making of a DPPO are made as a result of publication of the first public notice and officers are unable to resolve the issue such that the objection is withdrawn a further report shall be brought back to the nearest available Sub-Committee before the DPPO is made.
4. That a report be brought to this Committee within two years, for their consideration on the effectiveness of the DPPO's and as to whether to continue with, amend or cancel either of them.

27. HONEY LANE STREET TRADING

Assistant Solicitor, Rosaline Ferreira, introduced the report on the Honey Lane Street Trading area. The District Council had been approached by Waltham Abbey Town Council for a decision on changing Honey Lane into a 'non-consent' street. The senior Licensing Officer wrote to the County Highways department and the Police to

seek their views on this. Essex County Council Highways department supported this action but the Police did not.

It was noted that if the Committee agree to this course of action it would involve a full consultation process and adoption. The cost would be around £500 to advertise the proposal and then another £500 to confirm the order.

Councillor Mrs Smith commented that solving this problem depended on solving the parking problem. Councillor Mrs Gadsby said that this measure would make some difference. It was very unsafe at present. Councillor Wyatt agreed that trading on this street did exacerbate the situation. This should help with the parking in the long term.

The Committee agreed that the whole of Honey Lane should be included the 'non-consent' agreement.

RESOLVED:

That the Council undertake the necessary consultation with a view to making all of Honey Lane a prohibited street for the purpose of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982.

28. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003

The Committee noted the numbers of applications received and the determinations of those applications from 12 November 2008 to 20 March 2009.

29. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005

The Committee noted the number of applications received under the Gambling Act 2005 from 12 November 2008 to 20 March 2009.

30. REVIEW OF LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

A plea was made to rotate the Chairmanship of the Sub-committees, to enable more members to gain experience.

31. REVIEW OF CURRENT AND FUTURE TRAINING NEEDS FOR THE COMMITTEE

No new training needs were identified.

32. MATTERS ARISING

No new matters were raised by the Committee.

33. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN



Epping Forest District Council

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Lower Swaines playing fields, Epping, including the public footpath running along the boundary of St John's School from Lower Swaines to Bury Lane. Garages behind 2 Lower Swaines and public land and highway extending from St John's School outside numbers 2 - 18 and 1 - 43 Lower Swaines

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING. All dimensions, levels and information indicated is to be verified on the ground at the commencement of any work.

Revisions

Drawing 2 (Version 2)

Drawing No. 200903010

Date: 21/01/09 Scale: 1:2500

Drawn by: Robert Irwin

Checked by:

Approved by:

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