



Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held at the Bourges/Viersen Room - Town Hall
on 10 March 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors H Newton (Chairman), P Thacker (Vice-Chairman), R Dobbs, P Hiller, N Khan, D Morley, B Saltmarsh and P Kreling

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr S A Majid

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Adrian Day, Licensing Manager
Ian Robinson, Regulatory Officer, Taxi Enforcement
Ken Gray, Principal Licensing Officer
Amy Brown, Solicitor
Alex Daynes, Senior Governance Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Lowndes and North.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Khan declared a prejudicial interest in item 4 on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2008 were agreed as an accurate record with the following amendment; Councillor Saltmarsh should be marked as 'present'.

4. Changes in the Licensing Conditions for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licences

Councillor Khan left the meeting as he had declared a prejudicial interest in this item.

The Committee received a report from the Regulatory Officer and was asked to approve the four recommendations relating to additional conditions on taxi licences concerning CCTV provision, NVQ qualifications for new and existing drivers and door signage relating to the status of the taxi and insurance implications. The Regulatory Officer highlighted incidents of violence towards drivers and the subsequent fall in attacks and incidences of abuse experienced by other authorities who had CCTV installed.

The Regulatory Officer advised the committee that public confidence and the image of the trade would improve if the NVQ qualification was taken as well as drivers' abilities to cope with troublesome passengers.

Mr Majid, a representative of the trade, spoke against the application. Although Mr Majid admitted that there were incidents of violence and abuse directed at drivers, he did not agree that the installation of CCTV would help. Mr Majid stated that drivers had previously had to wait for several hours for Police to arrive at an incident and even then were not fully helpful in resolving the matter and taking action against the accused. Mr Majid claimed that most attacks happened outside the vehicle and would therefore, not be captured by the CCTV system. The cost of the CCTV was also a deterrent to drivers and not all drivers felt the need to have CCTV as they did not feel particularly threatened or at risk; therefore, CCTV should not be mandatory for all drivers.

Regarding the NVQ qualification, Mr Majid raised issues about the number of complaints received compared to the number of journeys provided (44 complaints and approximately 2 million journeys a year). Mr Majid questioned the relevance of the syllabus for the NVQ stating that much of it could not be taught and more consultation with the trade would be needed to deliver a meaningful, relevant and acceptable syllabus for drivers in Peterborough. Mr Majid claimed that little on the syllabus would be of use to existing, experienced drivers.

The Committee posed questions to Mr Majid about passenger - not just driver – safety and the cost implications of the CCTV system.

The objector, Mr Majid and the Regulatory Officer summed up their cases.

All parties and the public left the committee room while Members debated the application and made their decision.

RESOLVED: (unanimously) to accept all the recommendations proposed by the Regulatory Officer contained in the report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION: Members of the Licensing Committee had received representations from the Licensing Officer of Peterborough City Council as well as Mr Majid, a representative of the trade. Both parties provided the committee with well reasoned arguments on the subject at hand. Members gave careful consideration to all representations received and reached the following conclusion:

To implement all recommendations put forward by the Regulatory Officer.

In reaching this decision, Members had utmost regard for the safety of the trade - who they recognise do a very valuable job - as well as the passengers they carry.

Finally, Members were keen to ensure that the NVQ course was of value to drivers and passengers and therefore requested that the Taxi Licensing Officers present an update report to them in 12 months time.

CHAIRMAN
9.30 - 11.30 am