
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE, 12.12.16

Present: Councillors Annwen Daniels, Annwen Hughes (Chair), John Brynmor Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Angela Russell, Ann Williams and John Wyn Williams

Also in Attendance: Gareth Jones (Senior Planning and Environment Manager), Gwenan Mai Roberts (Licensing Manager), Geraint B. Edwards (Solicitor) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer)

Councillors Anwen Davies and Dilwyn Morgan were welcomed to the Committee.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Peter Read, Louise Hughes, Tudor Owen and Elfed W Williams.

It was reported that Councillor Tudor Owen had recently received surgery, and it was decided that the Committee would send him a card wishing him well for a full and speedy recovery.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, that took place on 20 June 2016, as a true record.

5. MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEES

Submitted, for information, the minutes of the meetings of the General Licensing Sub-committee that took place on 25.05.16, 04.10.16 and 19.10.16.

6. LICENSING TAXIS AND THE IMMIGRATION ACT 2016

The report of the Head of Regulatory Services was submitted highlighting the amendments to the Immigration Act 2016 that had come into effect on 1st December 2016. The purpose of the amendments were to ensure that Licensing Authorities do not present licences to illegal immigrants and when they undertake this duty they conduct immigration checks.

When he elaborated on the background the officer noted,

- That the Act amended the current UK licensing systems to try and prevent illegal working in the taxis/private hire/hackney vehicle licensing sector.

- The 2016 Act incorporated the immigration safeguarding methods in the existing licensing systems in the context of the Licensing Act 2003 across the UK, however the arrangements for these provisions had not been confirmed.

Attention was drawn to the impact of the new measures listed in the report together with the duties of the Licensing Authorities to implement the amendments to the Act.

When considering the implications of implementing these amendments, it was noted that all new legislation presented more work and usually this was yet another step in a process rather than new work. It was explained that although Licensing Officers already checked some of the documentation required under the Immigration Act 2016, the new requirements would entail undertaking every check in the presence of the applicant; the initial checks and requests could take more time to process as well as arranging for officers to receive further training on the identification of fake documents. Also, as it appeared that these would be additional steps in the application checking process, it was difficult to fully measure the implications and the situation may be clearer within 6 months.

In response to a question regarding the Legislation coming into effect on 1st December, it was explained that the guidelines had been received following this date and no Welsh version was available.

In response to a question regarding sharing the information with taxi companies, it was noted that the news-sheet had not been distributed and therefore the suggestion was accepted to create a simple and clear leaflet for taxi companies that would outline the amendments to the Immigration Act 2016.

The information was accepted.

7. FFORDD GWYNEDD - LICENSING EXERCISE

An oral update was received from the Senior Planning and Environment Manager on the licensing service's recent exercises over the last 12 months to review their work processes to ensure that the people of Gwynedd were central to what was being implemented.

It was noted that the process provided an opportunity for all to have an input into the service review and the process had identified opportunities such as,

- Reconciling and rationalisation of taxi licensing policies
- Introduction of self-service
- Delete the elements with no value within the process - need to create a smooth process

The next steps of the exercise will be to identify the resource to improve and facilitate

Matters arising from the ensuing discussion;

- Need to ensure consistency with taxi fees
- Need to update the Committee often of the situation in order to ensure support to facilitate the process forward

In response to a question regarding facilitating the reviews, it was noted that the Department would look for the Committee's support as well as to give guidance to the process. It was suggested that a working group should be established to discuss the reviews and ensure input.

The information was accepted and the Department was thanked for the work.

The meeting commenced at 10:00am and concluded at 10:50am.