

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
LICENSING COMMITTEE (NON LICENSING ACT 2003 FUNCTIONS)

3.00PM 29 JUNE 2023

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL,
NORTON ROAD, HOVE, BN3 3BQ - HTH/CC**

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Daniel (Chair), Sheard (Deputy Chair), Pickett (Opposition Spokesperson), Davis, Baghoth, Cattell, Czolak, Fowler, Hewitt, Nann, Robinson, C Theobald and Thomson

Apologies: Councillors Lyons and McGregor

PART ONE

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) Declarations of Substitutes

Apologies were sent from Councillors McGregor and Lyons.
There were no substitutes.

(b) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests in matters listed on the agenda.

(c) Exclusion of Press and Public

The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any of the items listed on the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be not be excluded.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Licensing Committee (Non-Licensing Act 2003 Functions) Meeting held on 3 March 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair gave the following communications:

I recognise the vital role taxis and private hire drivers play in transporting people, especially vulnerable people, around the city. They are in many ways the eyes and ears

of the city and hold a unique position of trust in the community. Safeguarding the public is our priority and we are proud of our high licensing standards in Brighton and Hove.

Taking people around the city safely is one of the most trusted and important services in the city. I value our taxi trade, and I am proud of the very standards we have developed in the city. When I meet councillors from other parts of the country, they envy our record and our Blue Book. Both the council and the trade have been ahead of the game nationally in adapting to the needs and expectations of the public.

I'm looking forward to attending the next Taxi forum and in the meantime, I intend to reach out and engage with the various trade representatives that make up the forum. I know that the top item on their agenda is engage with councillors and me, in particular, to discuss proposed changes looking at a "points system" around driver conduct.

I'm pleased that we have been able to find funding, through safer streets 4, to extend the taxi marshal service during the summer and early autumn months. This has been a useful way of increasing the safety of the public and eased the burden on drivers. We hope further funding becomes available and we would bid to continue and extend this work.

It's also good to note that another Multi-Agency Enforcement Operation took place on the 17th June and I look forward to hearing the officers update in their report on our agenda today.

4 CALLOVER

The following item was reserved for discussion:

Item 7 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Enforcement and Monitoring

5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

There were none.

6 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

There were none.

7 HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER ENFORCEMENT AND MONITORING

7.1 The Chair invited Alex Evans to introduce the report starting on page 11 of the agenda.

7.2 Councillor Baghoth was informed that an English language test has been introduced for all new taxi drivers – the test can also be used as a developmental tool for existing taxi drivers that don't speak English as their first language. There are also ethnic groups within the trade that can translate any new conditions to drivers.

7.3 Councillor Czolak was informed that:

- Every driver has to go through a medical and meet the group 2 standard;
- When they reach their 45 birthday they have to take the medical test again, and then every 5 years until their 65th birthday after which it becomes an annual test;
- Discretionary information about drivers can be requested by the Council for example if they have a criminal record;
- There are 7 fully electric vehicles and 150 hybrid vehicles currently in the city;
- The approved garages that do the compliance testing decide if a vehicle is in exceptional condition to last the extra 2 years on the license;
- There are currently 600 Hackney Carriages in the city, and 5 more plates are added each year;
- There are currently 370 private hire vehicles in the city;
- It is a legal requirement for all taxis to have internal cameras which clearly show the driver and passengers.

7.4 Councillor Pickett was informed that:

- Taxi drivers are buying older models of cars as they are cheaper;
- There is a shortage of wheelchair accessible vehicles;
- The offence of 'bilking' (making off without payment after a taxi ride) is being raised with Council officers for awareness.

7.5 Councillor Davis was informed that:

- Vehicles are allowed to have their licenses renewed for up to 10 years, with an extra 2 if the vehicle is in exceptional condition;
- Wheelchair accessible vehicles are allowed to have their licenses renewed for up to 14 years with 3 checks a year up until 2025;
- A points system for taxi drivers who commit low level offences will be brought to Committee in October 2023.

7.6 Councillor Hewitt was informed that during the multi agency operation, vehicles were stopped at random.

7.7 Councillor Theobald was informed that:

- It is often independent drivers that don't accept taxi vouchers instead of drivers on the circuit who can claim them back from the Council;
- Heart attacks, eyesight, and blood pressure are the main causes of why drivers fail the group 2 medical test.

7.8 Councillor Fowler was informed that if the Police find a taxi driver committing an offence, that information is fed back to the Council to take action.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members note the contents of this report and that officers should continue to act as appropriate.

8 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 4.26pm

Signed Chairman

Dated this day of