

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HELD ON THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER, 2012 AT 4.00 P.M.

IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Bottomer, B. (Chairman)
Lovell, A. (Vice-Chairman)

Anslow, C.	Rowley, J.
Ball, G. D.	Sutton, Mrs. H. M.
Jones, R.	Toth, J.

6. Apologies

No apologies were received.

7. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

8. Minutes

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 August, 2012. The Chairman advised that with respect to item 5, and the flood risk assessment referred to, he had been informed that the County Council had announced a £300,000 investment package to clean up the county's road gullies to ensure that they were fit for purpose for the winter. They would be prioritising particularly problematic drainage spots. A Member expressed concern that there was no focal point to which a problem could be reported to and clarification was needed on which organisation was responsible for which issues. The Corporate Director advised that K. Lawlor the Head of Environmental Services, J. Presland the Waste & Engineering Services Manager or S. Schofield the Senior Technical Assistant should be contacted initially. He explained that each individual issue had to be assessed and discussions were ongoing with the County Council to seek to simplify matters.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 August, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9. Revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Health.

The Head of Environmental Health explained that licenses needed to be issued for –

- Hackney Carriage vehicles (Taxis)
- Hackney Carriage Proprietors
- Private Hire vehicles
- Private Hire Operators
- Drivers

The Legal Framework was currently covered by the Town Police Clauses Act, 1847; Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976; Cannock Chase Council's Byelaws, Licensing Policy and Conditions and Best Practice Guidance.

The need to revise the Policy had arisen through a number of issues identified by Officers, Members, the Trade and due to outdated legislative framework, policy and conditions. The Law Commission was undertaking a review and it was anticipated that following a consultation process a draft bill would be drawn up.

A consultation document with respect to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy had been issued on 11 June, 2012 with the closing date for comments being 31 August, 2012. Meetings had been held with the Trade and disabled user groups, telephone interviews had also been carried out with members of the public.

Issues consulted on totalled 41 with the most contentious being:

- Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles
- Enforcement process and sanctions
- Age of vehicles
- Booster seats
- Drugs and Alcohol testing
- Insurance issues

The next steps were to carry out a full evaluation of consultation responses. A revised draft Policy & Conditions would be produced and discussed with Members and the Trade. The new Policy would need to be approved via Cabinet and full Council. It was anticipated that further work would be required on certain issues, particularly wheelchair access vehicles, and the Policy would probably need to be revised in 2 or 3 stages. As a separate piece of work the Fees and Charges were also being reviewed.

A matrix of some of the responses to the consultation process was circulated at the meeting.

The Head of Environmental Health explained that the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles in Cannock Chase equated to only 8% of the total number of Hackney Carriage Vehicles as opposed to the national average of 25%. However the total number of Hackney Carriage Vehicles in Cannock Chase (approximately 300) was substantially higher than other authorities. Further research would be carried out, which would include liaising with other authorities, suppliers and the Trade. The Committee was advised that some disabled people had intimated that they preferred wheelchair access while others did not.

Further discussions would also be held with regard to the drugs/alcohol issue. It was explained that all new drivers would be tested at their own expense upon application and it was envisaged that existing drivers would be tested on an intelligence led basis paid for by the Council.

Members requested that items listed within the Report be crossed referenced with Best Practice Guidance when it was prepared and it was agreed that this would be done.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 5.15 p.m.