

LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE - 28 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: Councillor Livingston (Chair);
Councillors Dennis, D Edwards, Page and Skeats.

Apologies: Councillors Ennis, Grashoff, Vickers and Woodward.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2016 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

3. HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE EMISSION

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider and approve proposed changes to the existing emissions policy and introduce a phased upgrade to the Hackney Carriage vehicle fleet.

The report explained that under the Environment Act 1995, the Council had a duty to constantly review and assess the air quality within the Borough, and compare pollution concentrations against a set of European and National air quality standards. Monitoring had shown that Reading had areas where concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) were exceeding both European and national standards, and as such the Council had declared an Air Quality Management Area and implemented an Action Plan. The Council's Action Plan included proposals to investigate ways to reduce emissions for the local Hackney Carriage and Private Hire fleet.

The report stated that the Council had adopted the London Public Carriage Office (PCO) conditions of fitness as policy. This currently restricted the Hackney Carriage fleet to purpose built London Taxis International vehicles, the now out of production Metrocab or the Mercedes Vito taxi. The PCO currently had a Euro 5 emissions standard and 15 year age policy in place.

The technical details of each of the Euro standards were provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

The report explained previous policy decisions on Hackney Carriage vehicle emissions and proposed a new policy whereby:

- All Hackney Carriage Vehicles would be Euro 4 or equivalent by 1 October 2018
- All Hackney Carriage Vehicles would be Euro 5 or equivalent by 1 October 2021
- No Euro 5 or 6 Hackney Carriage vehicles were permitted to be over fifteen years old

The Committee noted that the move to Euro 4 or equivalent standard by 1 October 2018 would require up to 90 vehicles to be upgraded. In discussion it was noted that Birmingham City Council had secured Government funding for a scheme to re-power its Hackney Carriage fleet with replacement petrol engines with an LPG system which ran at better than the Euro 6 standard. This not only improved the emissions standard but reduced costs for drivers. The Committee was advised that there might be an opportunity to submit a bid to Defra later in the year for part-funding towards a similar air quality initiative.

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Asif Rashid, Chairman of Reading Taxi Association, was present at the meeting and addressed the Committee.

Resolved - That a decision on revising the Council's emissions standards be deferred pending receipt of further information on opportunities to bid for EU or Defra funding to support measures to reduce Hackney Carriage emissions.

4. SAFETY AT SPORTSGROUNDS POLICY

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to approve a policy on safety at sports grounds. The report explained that the Council had statutory duties for the safety certification of sports grounds to protect public safety at sports grounds and on sports ground stands regulated by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. These duties derived from the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended) and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987.

The report explained that whilst Reading Football Club had a policy which was renewed annually, the Council did not have a written policy in place covering Sports Grounds. The Sports Ground Safety Authority audited the Council annually and had recommended preparation of a Policy prior to the 2016/17 football season. Accordingly a draft policy had been prepared and reviewed by members of the Safety Advisory Group, which included representatives of:

- Reading Borough Council
- Reading Football Club
- London Irish RFU Club
- Thames Valley Police
- South Central Ambulance Service
- STAR supporters club
- Safety at Sports Grounds Association

The proposed policy was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The terms of reference of the Safety Advisory Group were attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

Resolved -

- (1) That the 'Safety at Sports Ground Policy', as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be formally approved;
- (2) That the terms of reference of the Safety Advisory Group, as attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.15pm)