

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT PLANNING, REGULATORY &
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
(GENERAL LICENSING MATTERS) –
18TH OCTOBER, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins
D. Bevan
G. L. Davies
M. Day
J. Hill
C. Meredith
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
B. Thomas
T. Smith
D. Wilkshire
B. Willis
L. Winnett

**WITH: Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing
Senior Licensing Officer
Solicitor**

AND: Applicant

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
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| No. 1 | <u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service. | |

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| <p>No. 2</p> | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor G. Thomas.</p> | |
| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest and dispensations were received.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR 2020/21 AND 2021/22 (Q1 & Q2)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Licensing Officer.</p> <p>The Team Manager Trading Standards and Licensing advised that the report updated the Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing Committee on the work of the Licensing Team from the 1st April, 2020 to 31st March, 2021 and 1st April, 2021 to 30th September, 2021. The Team Manager spoke to the report and outlined the key points detailed in the report related to the Impact of Covid-19, staffing and duties, working practices along with the operational report, street trading, charity collections, scrap metal, freedom of information requests, inspection and enforcement activities and management report.</p> <p>The Team Manager noted that no formal complaints had been received during this period and referred Members to the appendices.</p> <p>A Member asked if there were any delays on DBS Checks.</p> <p>The Senior Licensing Officer advised that DBS checks were now on a rolling programme and where due to be followed up in December.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns in relation to staff reductions and the Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing advised that the Team was currently at full capacity and reassured Members that there had been no reductions in staff.</p> | |

It was added that where staff had been temporarily redeployed during the pandemic, appropriate measures were taken to backfill or extend other Officers hours for the period in question.

Another concern was raised in relation to the closure of the cash desk at the Civic Centre and it was reported applicants are able to pay over the phone using a card and invoices could be raised if an applicant wished to pay with cash. The Team Manager added that the service was continually looking at service improvement options and other payment options could be explored as appropriate.

In response to another concern raised by the Member in relation to interviewing of applicants, the Team Manager advised that the Team was now based at Anvil Court and an interview room was available if required. The Team Manager added that it was now widely accepted that interviews could be carried out via Teams and the Committee interviews which had been held in this way had been successful. The Team Manager further added that the Local Authority are now in a position to offer hybrid meetings, therefore he felt that there was now a balance in place.

A Member wished to extend thanks to staff for maintaining the high standard of work during this period.

Another Member welcomed the report and concurred that credit should be given to the Team as well as licence holders who have maintained their service during the pandemic.

A discussion ensued around the electric taxis pilot and it was reported that vehicles had been delivered and all electric charge points had been installed, however, there was a delay in the appointment of a management company. The Local Authority was not in a position to issue licences until the management company had been appointed by the Cardiff Capital Region and Welsh Government following their tender process. The Senior Licensing Officer added that there had been interest from taxi drivers and once the management company had been appointed the project could proceed.

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| | <p>The Team Manager added that it was hoped that this issue could be addressed as soon as possible in order to move this project along, however it was out of the Licensing Authority's control.</p> <p>In terms of extending the scheme, it was reported that there were no confirmed timeframes, therefore it could be a possibility.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>SCHEDULE OF APPLICATION FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Licensing Officer.</p> <p>The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the Applicant to Officers and Members of the Committee and gave an overview of the application to be considered.</p> <p>A number of questions were raised by Members in relation to the application and the questions were responded to accordingly by the Applicant and Officers.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to a particular individual be accepted and the granted the application for a new hackney carriage.</p> | |