

MEETING:	General Licensing Regulatory Board
DATE:	Wednesday, 23 October 2019
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Reception Room, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Wraith MBE (Chair), P. Birkinshaw, Cherryholme, Clarke, Danforth, Eastwood, Franklin, Gillis, Green, Greenhough, C. Johnson, W. Johnson, Kitching, Murray, Saunders, Shepherd, Tattersall, Williams and Wilson

10 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest from Members in respect of items on the agenda.

11 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4th September, 2019 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

12 Digitalisation of the Licensing Function

The Service Director Legal Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the ongoing project work being undertaken in order to digitalise the way that the Licensing Service operated.

It was noted that following an analysis of the licensing function it had been shown that processes and procedures within the service were predominantly paper based and labour intensive and a summary of the type of work undertaken was provided. Such activities required the Service to operate a 'front office' with a member of the licensing team occupying a meeting room in Westgate every afternoon. In addition, the team also managed a high volume of telephone calls from applicants, licensees, agents and representatives on a daily basis.

Within the context of the Future Council and Digital First agenda the current approach could no longer be justified and, therefore, the digitalisation project would aim to convert all existing manual operations (so far as was practicably feasible) into digital operations with the intention of the first phase being completed by March 2020.

The digitalisation would be undertaken in phases with phase one being to convert the existing local knowledge test booking system to an on-line self-service facility. The Council's Digital Team would undertake the process mapping, design and implementation of the new on-line booking system. The overall project ultimately intended to convert existing licensing processes into on-line, self-service procedures and thereby provide a more efficient customer interface. This would save time and resources and, more importantly, provide a 24/7 facility so that customers could access services at a time that suited them best.

In the ensuing discussion, the following matters were highlighted:

- Representatives of the Trade had been invited to a meeting yesterday so that they could talk to the Digital Team about their fears and concerns as well as any problems they were likely to experience. The Trade representatives were more than happy with the digitalisation proposals as it would benefit them greatly and save them valuable time when making a license application
- Training and support would be offered to all users. Drivers would also be invited to attend a workshop session where they could come in and 'test run' the system before the process became 'live'. Training of the new system would be rolled out to library staff so that drivers and applicants could access the system with appropriate support available in libraries
- It was intended that the process for applications and renewals would be extremely simple and that access could be gained from multiple devices. As a general rule, new applicants to the trade expected there to be an online application process and, therefore, the only issues likely to be encountered were with a small number of existing drivers. It was important to realise however, that many well used systems, such as the DVSA, had online portals, therefore, current drivers should be already familiar with other on-line services
- It was noted that in relation to applications made under the Licensing Act 2003, the government gateway would have to be used rather than the Council's own online system
- It was noted that the face to face contact arrangements currently in operation would be withdrawn following the implementation of the online system
- Arising out of the questioning, reference was also made to the ways in which appropriate verifications and authentications would be undertaken in relation to applicant and driver identification, medical and criminal history checks

RESOLVED that the work being undertaken by the Licensing Service, supported by the Licensing Trade, in relation to the digitalisation of the Licensing Function be noted and supported.

13 Driver Appeal - Update

The Service Director Legal Services submitted a report providing an overview of the outcome of an appeal made to the Magistrates Court by a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver following a decision made by a General Licensing Regulatory Board Panel to revoke his driver licence.

The General Licensing Regulatory Board Panel had made its decision to revoke the licence on the 30th April, 2019 and the case had been presented to the Barnsley Magistrates Court by way of appeal on the 27th September, 2019.

In dismissing the appeal the Magistrates had stated they were satisfied that the Council had followed the correct procedures and that the decision of the Board was not wrong. The appeal had, therefore, been dismissed and the driver had been ordered to pay a contribution of costs of £300.

It was noted that this was the fourth time this year that cases presented by way of driver appeal to the Magistrates Court had been dismissed. This was testament to the excellent work undertaken by Panel Members and Officers.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report be noted; and
- (ii) that the Board place on record their thanks and appreciation to all involved for their continued hard work in supporting the Licensing Function and in ensuring the safety of the travelling public.

Chair