

Housing & Community Safety Select Committee

A meeting of Housing & Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday, 21st October, 2010.

Present: Cllr Julia Cherrett(Chairman), Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Cockerill(Vice Cllr Woodhead)

Officers: Mike Batty, Dave Kitching(DNS), Beccy Brown(RES), Sarah Whaley, Graham Birtle(L&D)

Also in attendance: Mr Mazhar Ghani(Stockton Hackney Carriage Association)

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr Bill Woodhead

HCS 27/10 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Bill Noble declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to item no 5 - EIT Review of Regulatory Services as he was a member of River Tees Port Health Authority.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

HCS 28/10 **Draft minutes from the meeting dated 4th October 2010.**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting which was held on the 4th October 2010.

CONCLUDED that the minutes be approved.

HCS 29/10 **Minutes of the meeting held on 10th August 2010 to be considered for signature.**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th August 2010 for signature.

CONCLUDED that the minutes were signed as a true record.

HCS 30/10 **Review of Taxi Licensing**

Members were asked to consider and comment on the final draft recommendations for the EIT Review of Taxi Licensing prior to the report being submitted to Executive Scrutiny and then Cabinet.

The Chair highlighted each of the draft recommendations contained within the attached report and asked members to agree or comment. Members agreed with the draft recommendations with the exception of the following:

1) 2.5 of the Executive Summary contained within the report was to be re worded from 'The Committee recommend that the final determination of fees be delegated to the Councils Licensing Committee', to, 'The Committee recommend that the final determination of fees be delegated to the Cabinet if six or more objections are received.' Mr Ghani, representing the Stockton Hackney Carriage Association, asked the Committee that where legislation or new procedures were put in place the Stockton Hackney Carriage Association were

notified as soon as possible enabling them time to respond to any issues they may have.

2) Paragraph 2.6 was thought to confuse two issues, that of the introduction of 3 year licences as well as reintroducing administrative costs for reminders. In order to provide greater clarity paragraph 2.6 was amended and a new paragraph 2.7 was introduced that reads as follows:

The taxi trade representatives put forward a suggestion that the Council introduce a three-year driver licence to achieve a substantial reduction in administrative costs. Whilst this is feasible it may not be welcomed by all drivers and operators. The Committee recommend that the trade are consulted to determine the support for 3 year licenses and whether they should be compulsory to allow larger cost savings, or optional.

The trade also requested that the Authority reintroduce the practice of sending reminders and partially completed application forms at renewal times. This has operated in the past but stopped in order to reduce postage and printing costs. Its reintroduction will increase costs to the trade. The Committee recommend that the trade be consulted on the reintroduction of reminders/partly completed application forms and introduced if sufficient support is given.

3) 2.10 of the Executive Summary contained within the report was agreed however the Trading Standards and Licensing Manager informed the Committee that a letter had recently been received informing the Authority that a Taxi Rank had been negotiated between 5-6 drivers and a private landowner which was to be situated within Thornaby, however it was recognised that this would be for a limited number. Mr Ghani informed Members that he was completely unaware of this and expressed his concerns of potential conflict should other drivers try to use the Taxi Rank. Mr Ghani impressed upon the Committee the importance of continuing discussions with all relevant parties to attempt to identify a suitable location for a taxi rank to serve Thornaby Town Centre for the rest of the association.

4) 2.11 of the Executive Summary contained within the report was agreed. The Committee heard that the results of the in house report would be presented at the next Housing and Community Safety Committee and then to Cabinet on 25th November 2010. The Trading Standards and Licensing Manager agreed that Stockton Hackney Carriage Association would receive a copy of this report from the Officer Traffic Group.

Mr Ghani informed the Committee that a complaint had been received by the Police as confirmed by the Traffic and Road Safety Manager, however when asked who had raised the objection no reply was received. As this was not a matter for The Trading Standards and Licensing Manager and therefore was unable to respond the Head of Community Protection informed Mr Ghani that he would take the matter up with Technical Services and inform them of the Associations frustrations.

CONCLUDED that the draft recommendations be agreed as contained within the report with comments as detailed above.

**HCS
31/10**

Monitoring Update

Members were asked to consider the assessments of progress contained within the attached progress updates on the implementation of previously agreed recommendations for the EIT Review of Regulatory Services.

The Trading Standards and Licensing Manager provided the Committee with a PowerPoint presentation showing the newly updated Trading Standards Website. Members agreed that this was a really useful tool and asked that it be made available by a link to other relevant external sites to enable it to be accessed by many user groups across the borough. Members also suggested that all Ward Councillors be informed of the website in order to assist constituents looking for help in relation to Trading Standards/Licensing queries. The Chair also asked that the Trading Standards and Licensing Manager publicise this and also make it available at the next 'Are You Being Served' event.

Members briefly discussed the rest of the updates with officers and noted the progress to date.

CONCLUDED that Members received and noted the progress updates.

**HCS
32/10**

EIT Gateway Review of: Administration, PA Support, Business Support and Performance Management

Members were asked to receive the Baseline report for the EIT Gateway Review of Administration, PA Support, Business Support and Performance Management.

The Administration Review - Programme Manager presented the Baseline report to Members and highlighted that the initial stage was determining which members of staff were actually covered by this review as there was cross over with other reviews currently being undertaken. The Committee heard that the review covered 545 staff and that the cost per annum for these employees equated to £9.1 million as detailed within the report.

Members also heard that the technical strand of this review was originally to be carried out in phase 2, however with the recent changes to the EIT reviews, this in fact would now be incorporated with phase 1. It would also help to eliminate the uncertainty for staff by being completed early.

The Committee were informed that the Asset Management Review was looking at Stockton's Buildings and that both reviews would be taking into account each others findings as there were areas of overlap and information which would need to be shared.

The Administration Review - Programme Manager gave an overview of each area of the report and highlighted in particular the 'Review Principles, and 'Evidence from other organisations'.

Committee Members heard that Newcastle City Council were further advanced with a similar review and Stockton Borough Council would be approaching

Newcastle City Council to learn of outcomes and impacts faced on Services within their authority. This would be reported back at a future Housing and Community Safety Select Committee meeting.

When outlining the categories of staff covered in this review, Members asked for clarity on what the heading 'other' covered. The Administration Review - Programme Manager agreed to provide a clearer breakdown for Members.

It was agreed that possible options would come back to this meeting in November.

CONCLUDED that the Baseline report be received and noted.

**HCS
33/10** **Work Programme**

CONCLUDED that the Work Programme be noted.

**HCS
34/10** **Chairs Update**

The Chair asked the Head of Community Protection to update the Committee with the latest information in relation to a court hearing regarding Taxi Drivers obtaining licences from other authorities who were operating in the Borough of Stockton.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.