



MINUTES OF LICENSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Wednesday, 18 November 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Roy Lees (Chair), Councillor Anthony Gee (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Jean Cronshaw, Doreen Dickinson, Gordon France, Margaret France, Keith Iddon, Mark Jarnell, Hasina Khan, Margaret Lees, Matthew Lynch, Mick Muncaster, Ralph Snape and John Walker

OFFICERS: Lesley Miller (Regulatory Services Manager), Alex Jackson (Legal Services Team Leader), Jodi Ingram (Solicitor), Stephen Culleton (Licensing Officer), Jane Kelsall (Student Environmental Health Officer) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer) Detective Inspector Tony Baxter (Blackpool Safeguarding Children Board)

APOLOGIES: None.

OTHER MEMBERS: One member of the public was present.

15.LPS.15 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Licensing and Public Safety Committee held on 22 July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

15.LPS.16 Declarations of Any Interests

No declarations of any interests were received.

15.LPS.17 Minutes of the meetings of the General Licensing Sub Committee's

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the General Licensing Sub Committee's held on 15 July, 7 October and 4 November 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

15.LPS.18 Minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Act 2003 Sub Committee's

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Licensing Act 2003 Sub Committee meeting held on 4 November 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

15.LPS.19 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the Council's licensing functions

Detective Inspector Tony Baxter of the Public Protection Unit, (Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board) attended the Committee meeting to deliver a presentation on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the taxi trade. The purpose of the presentation was to explain to members what CSE is, how it is carried out and how the licensing trade could assist in preventing this. Furthermore, the presentation was aimed at persuading members to make safeguarding training a mandatory requirement for the licensing trade.

DI Baxter explained that it had become a common misconception that CSE was something that was only carried out by men in the Asian communities and as the Casey report had criticised Taxi drivers, the trade was having a hard time shaking these incorrect views. He reiterated that the presentation was not at all suggesting that all taxi drivers were potential perpetrators, more so that with training and support, taxi drivers along with other licensed trades could work in partnership with the authorities to help prevent CSE from happening and identify potential leads for the Public Protection Unit to investigate.

The presentation is being rolled out county wide with the aim that all authorities agree to make safeguarding training compulsory which will result in a consistent approach being adopted across all local authorities in Lancashire. The presentation helped to raise awareness of CSE and educate people on the warning signs and behaviours to help dispel these common myths. Perpetrators can be an adult or another young person, male or female and any ethnicity. They are visible in everyday life and are often articulate, plausible and 'savvy'. Not all are involved in commercial exploitation and although not necessarily convicted of, some have links to other criminal behaviour.

The presentation was very informative and prompted valuable discussion around how the delivery of suitable training for all the authorities licensing trade could best be achieved. It was agreed by all the Committee that the Council's policies and procedures around CSE needed to be more robust and that the taxi trade and other licensed businesses could assist the Council in the process of identifying potential cases of CSE.

The Chair thanked DI Baxter for attending the meeting to deliver the presentation on CSE that had prompted a detailed discussion by the Committee. The presentation would be circulated to all Members of the Licensing and Public Safety Committee for their information.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

15.LPS.20 Safeguarding, Suitability and Convictions Policy for Taxi Licensing

The Director of Public Protection, Steetscene and Community submitted a report for Members to consider the approval of a draft for Taxi Licensing.

The existing Convictions Policy and Guidelines titled 'Statement of Policy Concerning the Relevance of Criminal Convictions Relating to the Determination of Application or Renewal for a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Drivers Licence and The Operators and Proprietors of those Vehicles' was adopted by the Licensing and Public Safety Committee in 2008.

In February 2015, the Casey Report investigating Taxi Licensing in Rotherham and the convictions of licensed drivers for Child Sexual Exploitation raised a number of questions in relation to Council policies and made recommendations with regard to the consideration of complaints, allegations, investigations, arrests and charges, where no conviction was secured.

Rotherham had been reliant on a record of convictions before any action was taken, an approach that was severely criticised by the Casey report as not sending a strong message on acceptable behaviour and failing to adequately protect or provide reassurance for the public.

The Committee were reminded that they do not need the same burden of proof as required to secure a conviction to suspend, revoke or refuse a licence and that they do not have to prove an allegation or complaint beyond reasonable doubt, or await conviction.

It was clear that a robust and more extensive policy and guidelines were required to not only protect the public and potential victims but also protect other fit and proper drivers that may be tainted by association.

Apart from a minor amendment to the wording around dishonesty on page 25 of the policy with the word 'exposed' being changed to 'put at risk', it was proposed by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Anthony Gee and subsequently **RESOLVED unanimously to approve the draft Safeguarding, Suitability and Convictions Statement of Policy.**

In response to the presentation that was delivered earlier in the meeting. Members considered that it was essential to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation concerns and issues across the licensing spectrum, including taxi drivers and asked if the Council could look into how this could be achieved. The Committee also requested that the Preston based DETER contact number be made available and accessible via the Council website and publicised through the Council's electronic e.bulletin's 'intheknow' and 'inthboro'.

It was proposed by the Chair, Councillor Roy Lees, seconded by the Vice Chair, Councillor Anthony Gee and subsequently **RESOLVED for officers to submit a report to the next meeting of the Licensing and Public Safety Committee to look at the options regarding the delivery of Child Sexual Exploitation training for all the Council's licensing functions and to consider making any such training a mandatory requirement. Furthermore it was also RESOLVED that officers consider the introduction of a mandatory requirement for drivers to sign up to the DBS update service so that the Council will be notified the instant changes are made.**

Chair

Date