

BROADLAND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Broadland Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee of Broadland District Council, held on Monday, 3 July 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: L Starling (Chairman), B Baby (Vice-Chair), A Crotch, J Emsell, J Harvey, K Kelly, P Newstead, D Thomas, E Tovell and T Yousefian

Apology for Absence: Councillor: R Potter

Officers in Attendance: N Howard (Assistant Director for Regulatory), L Chant (Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager) and J Overy (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance: Councillor: J Bailey

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr R Potter.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

3. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee passed a resolution under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that the consideration of the items is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

4. LICENSING SERVICE REVIEW

The Assistant Director for Regulatory introduced the exempt report, which presented the findings of a Licensing Service review and set out proposals for changes to the service structure and capacity to address a deficit in service delivery capacity and to ensure the Council had a robust and sustainable Licensing Service.

Members were referred to the background papers, which set out the findings of a review of fees and charges, which would be considered by Cabinet on 18 July 2023. The review had concluded that the current schedule of fees and charges did not recover the full costs of delivering Licensing Services, which meant that some licensing activities were being subsidised by Council Taxpayers.

The Food Safety and Licensing Manager added that the proposals in the report would make the Council's Licensing Service fit-for-purpose in terms of capacity to deliver a clean and efficient licensing service, for the benefit and protection of the local economy and public safety.

The Assistant Director for Regulatory advised the meeting that the Licensing service has been operated in collaboration with South Norfolk Council since January 2020 and had been operating under strain throughout this time due to high workloads relative to staffing capacity. Local government was also facing increasing pressure from the introduction of new animal licensing legislation, which had proven to be particularly complex, demanding, and costly.

Temporary contractors had been used to deliver capacity over this period, funded by additional Government money to support services during the pandemic, but this funding would end on 30 September 2023. If the increase in Fees and Charges proposed in the accompanying report, were agreed they would fully fund the staffing growth proposals for the Licensing Service. Costs for the service would be split on a 45/55 percent basis with South Norfolk.

The Committee was reminded that there had been a commitment to complete a service transformation review of the Council's Licensing Service in the Delivery Plan 2022-2024 and that as the additional funding for the service would cease on 30 September 2023 it was considered timely to bring the review to members at this stage.

In response to a query the Committee was advised that the recruitment of staff was an issue nationally and the technical nature of much licensing work made officers in high demand, however as Broadland and South Norfolk were pleasant rural areas they were likely to prove attractive to potential staff. Existing staff were also valued and supported to encourage retention.

In answer to a question, the Committee were informed that around 40 percent of private hire vehicles in the District were electric vehicles and that this was an increasing trend that was largely driven by market forces.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that Uber drivers were subject to the same licensing regulations as all other private hire drivers. The Committee was also advised that there were many areas across both local authorities where the services were aligned, but there was no cross subsidy between each sovereign Council.

It was also confirmed that drivers recognised that Broadland provided a good private hire licensing service, which some preferred over that of other local authorities.

RESOLVED

To recommend to Cabinet to agree the Licensing Service Review proposals detailed in the report (at paragraph 4.2 and Appendix 2), to be implemented with effect from 1 October 2023.

(The meeting concluded at 6.36 pm)

Chairman