

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Licensing and Enforcement Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 15 November 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 10.52 am

8 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2023 were agreed as a true record.

9 Declarations of interest

Minute 14. Review of taxi rank provision in East Devon and proposals for amendment. Councillor Tim Dumper, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Councillor is a member of Exmouth Town Council.

10 Public Speaking

Dawn Dines, CEO and Founder of Stamp Out Spiking, an Exeter based organisation, addressed the Committee in order to raise awareness of the severity and impact on victims of drinks spiking.

Stamp out Spiking would welcome the opportunity to work alongside local Councillors and Officers to ensure that the public are made aware and are safeguarded. Spiking of drinks occurs not only in pubs and clubs, but also at other venues and events such as sports facilities and festivals. Stamp out Spiking could offer a presence at such events to help with raising awareness.

It was noted that drinks spiking was hugely under-reported and that victims were not only women and girls but also men and boys. Spiking of food and vapes also occurs. Stamp out Spiking would welcome collaborative working with other organisations and agencies to prevent this wide-spread problem.

The Chair thanked Ms Dines and emphasised the need for organisations to work together.

In response to questions from Councillors, the following points were discussed:

- County Councillors may be able to assist as they hold locality budgets, whereas District Councillors do not.
- Raising public awareness was key to stopping this issue and Stamp out Spiking's attendance at events, together with wide use of information posters would help with raising awareness.
- Stamp out Spiking had previously worked with the Cranbrook Education Campus as Cranbrook was one of the organisation's priorities, due to the young demographic of the growing community. Cllr Bloxham, as Cranbrook Ward Member, would liaise with Ms Dines regarding attendance at the upcoming Community Safety Group meeting.
- It was noted that a victim of spiking would start to feel ill very quickly and would need immediate help. There would be no memory of what occurred following the spiking.

It was agreed to circulate contact details for Stamp out Spiking after the meeting to enable Councillors to follow up on working together.

The Chair thanked Ms Dines for attending and speaking on this issue.

11 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

12 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no confidential / exempt items.

13 **Committee Update - Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005, Taxis & General Licensing**

The Chair welcomed the Licensing Manager and congratulated Mrs Norsworthy on her recent appointment to the post.

The Licensing Manager presented the report which provided an update on the activities of the Licensing Service under the Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005, Taxi legislation and General Licensing including Street Trading and Pavement Licences during the period July to November. The following points were highlighted:

- The Government had announced plans to extend the automatic off-sales entitlement provision until March 2025.
- The 'fast-track' pavement licence provisions were also extended to the end of September 2024.
- Under the Licensing Act, 14 premises licence applications were being processed at the time of writing the report, the number of Temporary Event Notices received remained at a high level and the Licensing Team continued to liaise actively with event organisers through the East Devon Safety Advisory Group.
- One premises licence had been granted after a Sub Committee hearing during the period covered by the report.
- Regarding work under the Gambling Act, the Government had published its white paper 'Gambling Reform for the Digital Age'. As agreed, responses to several consultations had been submitted.
- With regard to taxi work, there was a small variation in the figures since July, as set out at section 3.1.1 of the report. Officers continued to use the NR3 Register of Revocations, Refusals and Suspensions to check all new applications and applications for renewal. Officers have now also uploaded details of those individuals who have had a licence revoked, refused or suspended in East Devon.
- Six significant complaints had been investigated during the period covered by the report.
- Officers had inspected 25 vehicles by prior arrangement and undertaken unannounced checks at taxi ranks on four occasions since the last meeting.
- Two Licensing & Enforcement Sub Committee hearings related to taxi matters had been held during the period July to November.
- The draft policy containing changes to update the policy in line with the Taxi and Private Hire Statutory Standard was approved by full Council at its meeting on 18 October 2023. Changes were communicated to the taxi trade via a newsletter and at a recent taxi trade meeting.
- Officers remained in regular contact with the East Devon Taxi Association and have committed to regularly attending Association meetings.
- It was noted that the need to consider an increase to the Taxi Fare table may come forward in the near future, due to the on-going high cost of living.
- With regard to street trading consents, the current street trading regime and re-introduction of application fees had been adopted by the Council in May 2023. The Licensing Team recorded its thanks for the support of the Vice-Chair and Cranbrook

Town Council in assisting traders to find an alternative trading location during development work in Cranbrook.

- It was noted that there remain two separate regimes under which businesses may apply for a pavement licence, with Officers keeping developments in this area under review.
- Councillor training had been provided by the Institute of Licensing following the election in May, with additional in-house training for Councillors not able to attend provided by the previous interim Licensing Manager.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following points:

- It was noted that there is very little difference between the two regimes for pavement licences. The 'fast-track' regime introduced for District Councils to administer during the pandemic is faster than the process administered by Devon County Council.
- Spot checks on taxi ranks included Sidmouth. It had been noted that the public were using the Sidmouth taxi rank for parking and Civil Enforcement had been made aware of this. There were no other issues to note.
- Additional door signage for Hackney Carriages could be considered by the Licensing Team to improve visibility and information for the public.
- With regard to Temporary Event Notices, the fees are set by Government and have not increased since 2005.

Regarding the current level of fees for Temporary Event Notices, it was agreed to write to the MPs, with a copy to the relevant Government department, to bring attention to the lack of an increase since 2005.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

14 **Review of taxi rank provision in East Devon and proposals for amendment**

The Committee considered a report setting out a request from Devon County Highways to undertake improvement and several amendments to taxi ranks within East Devon, following a review of taxi rank provision across the District Council area.

The report contained options for improvement and amendments to taxi ranks, and also sought approval to commence consultation with the taxi trade. It was emphasised that the Committee was not currently being asked to agree the amendments proposed by Devon County Highways.

Discussion on the report included the following points:

- In response to a query regarding the proposal to remove the only taxi rank in Ottery St Mary, and why it is considered acceptable for Ottery to lose the rank, the Licensing Manager would follow this up with Devon County Highways.
- Concern was expressed regarding the proposal to upgrade the ranks in High Street, Honiton to No Stopping At Any Time as this would impact on available locations for drivers to drop-off passengers.
- It was noted that the taxi rank at Victoria Road, Exmouth becomes very congested at night time, as does the rank in The Strand, and the proposed loss of a space at Victoria Road would have a negative impact on congestion.
- There have been complaints about people parking on the Imperial Road, Exmouth taxi rank.

Councillor Dumper advised that he could take any concerns to the next meeting of the Devon County Council East Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee. Members were asked to submit concerns to Councillor Dumper, with a copy to the Licensing Manager.

RESOLVED

The Committee agreed to approve the commencement of consultation with the taxi trade on the options contained in the report.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

K Bloxham (Vice-Chair)
O Davey
T Dumper
P Faithfull
S Gazzard
J Whibley (Chair)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

R Collins

Officers in attendance:

Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Phillippa Norsworthy, Licensing Officer
Giles Salter, Solicitor

Councillor apologies:

B Bailey
V Bonetta
M Chapman
S Hawkins
N Hookway
C Nicholas

Chair

Date: