

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD IN
COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON THURSDAY,
19 DECEMBER 2013 AT 1.30PM

Present:

Councillor R Williams - Chairperson

Councillors

G W Davies MBE
E Dodd
P James
P N John
B Jones

Councillors

J E Lewis
D R W Lewis
H E Morgan
D G Owen
G Thomas

Officers:

L Jones - Group Manager - Public Protection
Y Witchell - Licensing and Registration Officer
A Lee - Legal Officer
J Monks - Democratic Services Officer - Committees

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor R D Jenkins - Unwell
Councillor E Venables - Personal Commitments

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

35 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on the 24th October 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record.

36 REGULATORY SERVICES COLLABORATION

The Group Manager - Public Protection gave a presentation to update the Committee on the background and progress of the regulatory services regional collaboration project between Bridgend, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Councils. The report on the proposals was approved by Cabinet in July 2013 and all three Councils had presented the same message and consistency in relation to the project's development and implementation.

He explained that the proposal was for a single shared service under a single management structure, governed by a newly created Joint Committee, which would include the Leader and Deputy Leader, as well as the existing Licensing Committees and Sub-Committees in each of the three Councils as appropriate, as there were legal reasons for maintaining the licensing functions separately. This proposal would form part of the development of the detailed business case.

The Group Manager - Public Protection explained some of the drivers for change:

- Financial pressures/savings/efficiencies - resulting in over £400k over three years;
- The Welsh Government Collaboration agenda as a result of the Simpson Report;
- The need to ensure future services, resilience/long term sustainability;
- The opportunity to remodel the regulatory services;
- Opportunity to obtain the Welsh Government's Collaboration Fund (The Welsh Government had held back £10m to encourage collaboration across Wales).

The Group Manager - Public Protection informed the Committee that staff in BCBC's Public Protection already had strong links with their counterparts in the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils, which had led to the three Heads of Service presenting to each of the Chief Executives to develop proposals and the successful bid for a Regional Collaboration Fund achieving £750k. Over 200 people are involved with a controlled budget of around £8m. The funds would be paid in three tranches payments of £250k over the next three years, which had supported the formation of the Project Team. He advised Members that the vision statement was to have a fully integrated regulatory services function working across the three authorities, to include Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing. All three local authorities would benefit both operationally and financially from the project, with expected savings of £1m by 2016, which was the dictate of the Welsh Government. The project would also enhance the technical capabilities of staff teams.

He informed Members that Cabinet had agreed that in the interim the Chief Executive would be the Project Sponsor, hosted by Cardiff Public Protection Project Manager, with shared management through existing governance; however there was concern around which authority would lead. He reported that Option C had been chosen, which allowed for parity of resources and control over the new arrangements and explained the objectives of the collaboration:

- The three Councils would benefit both operationally and financially;
- Customer Services would be maintained;
- Savings in excess of £1m by 2016 would be achieved;
- Incremental resilience across the region;
- Enhancement of technical capability of the staff teams;
- Dynamic operating model, sustainable on a 24/7 basis.

He reported that there had been a lot of activity over a ten week period, including workshops, with technical meetings built in. The report had been sent to the Joint Shadow Committee and if approved, would then go through the scrutiny process, after which it would be presented to Cabinet and Council in all three authorities.

One Member was concerned that the collaboration would result in job losses of experienced and trained staff and asked how many jobs would be lost particularly, in view of the fact that Bridgend was the smallest authority of the three.

The Group Manager - Public Protection explained that it was too early in the process to predict how many; however from the licensing point of view the staff complement would remain the same with possibly an increase in the number of Enforcement Officers. He added that it would be wrong however to predetermine, as there was a formal legal process to be carried out and staffing levels would be required to fit the new model. He advised Members that he did not believe the process would be in excess of the savings he was already required to find, and stressed that there would be an even greater impact on the Authority if collaboration did not take place.

One Member asked whether the different departments, i.e. Public Protection, Trading Standards, Licensing were likely to be centralised, and therefore the possibility of staff having to relocate.

The Group Manager - Public Protection advised that as those areas were inter-related, the proposal was for a fully integrated team operating across all three authorities and reiterated that Licensing would be maintained separately. He added that a single integrated management structure would make the service more streamlined and cost effective, as the service costs consisted predominately of staffing.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

37 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4, and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above to consider this item in private, with the public excluded from the meeting, as it was considered that in all the circumstances relating to the item, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, because the information would be prejudicial to the applicants.

Minute No.

Summary of Item:

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Application for grant of a new licence to drive Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.