

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held in Vernon Cross Room, Ely Museum, Ely on Monday, 17th May 2017 at 9.30am.

P R E S E N T

Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh (Chairman)
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor Sue Austen
Councillor Paul Cox
Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Carol Sennitt
Councillor Alan Sharp

OFFICERS

Stewart Broome – Senior Licensing Officer
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Lyndsay Kirkby – Trainee Solicitor
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer

42. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Chris Morris.

43. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Paul Cox declared a personal interest as he had responded to the consultation with a suggestion but would approach the matter at this meeting with an open mind.

44. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 19th April 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

45. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman asked the Committee whether it was happy to continue to receive large amounts of paperwork with their agendas, particularly relating to licensing policy papers, or whether they would prefer to receive them by email. The general consensus was that the Committee preferred the paperwork in most cases though, at the suggestion of the Senior Licensing Officer, larger documents could be presented using the laptop and screen.

46. **MARKET STREET TAXI RANK CONSULTATION**

The Committee considered a report, R290 previously circulated, which reported on the statutory consultation on the Licensing Authority's proposal to extend the Market Street in Ely taxi rank forwards to the junction of High Street Back.

The Senior Licensing Officer reminded the Committee that taxi ranks were a vital part of the transport network, provided a safe location for the public to obtain services and connected to other transport links. Currently 9 to 10 taxi parking spaces were provided within Ely city centre by the Council, though there were additional ones at the railway station. This was a low number compared to the number of licensed vehicles.

The consultation proposed to expand the Market Street taxi rank, which would result in the loss of 2 public parking spaces. 71 responses had been received, as set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 in the report, with comments supporting or objecting to the proposal or with neutral comments. Supporters thought this would reduce pollution and reduce conflict and confusion. Opponents believed it would be detrimental to local business and general public amenity.

Alternative options were outlined in the report, under paragraphs 5.9 to 5.15, and included using a 'smart' rank, though this would be cost prohibitive, additional ranks or switching the taxi rank and public parking bays around.

The Committee was asked to consider the options and make a recommendation to full Council.

Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh could not deny that the taxi trade was needed and that there was an under-provision of taxi ranks for their use. A lot of objections had been received, including from the City of Ely Councillors and Councillors representing outlying villages. A balanced approach would be needed and the suggestion from Councillor Paul Cox, to swap the taxi and public bays, would be a suitable compromise as no public parking would be lost.

Councillor Alan Sharp noted that the Market Place rank had been mentioned as having a problem with its signage, making enforcement difficult. Would better signage help the situation? The Senior Licensing Officer did not think this would alter the issue, and stated that this rank was not as well used as the Market Street rank. Although the signage was clear it could be worth talking to Cambridgeshire County Council to correct the road markings to help enforcement.

Councillor Sharp continued and acknowledged that more taxi spaces were needed but was unsure where these could be provided. It might be an option to use one of the current bus stop spaces as additional space for taxis, as a solution was needed.

Councillor Julia Huffer thought that issue could be brought up with the County Council, as current County Councillors had taken an interest in the matter in hand.

The Environmental Services Manager thought this issue could be linked to the air quality consultation being undertaken, as it would be looking at pollution levels in Ely city centre. Maybe this could be used to highlight this issue.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith supported Councillor Paul Cox's idea, as there was a need to hold around 6 spaces for taxis. To provide a holding area for taxis, could the car park behind Thing-Me-Bobs be used? The Committee was advised that although the car park was privately owned it could be converted for taxi use but there would be issues over access to and from it onto Market Street. This could mean the installation of traffic lights and would mean those taxis using it would end up in front of the taxi rank. It would be better to use the car park near the Atrium as a holding area, otherwise there would be additional traffic problems.

Councillor Paul Cox did not think that using the car park in High Street Back would be feasible, as drivers would not know if there were any spaces before driving in, which could cause a potential bottleneck. A holding area system would be very complex and very expensive. The simplest solution would be to swap the bays around as previously suggested. The percentage of space for taxis versus public vehicles could also be amended and 1 bus stop could be used for public parking instead. When the leisure centre was open then an additional taxi rank would be required there too.

The Senior Licensing Officer explained that currently the public were approaching taxis parked in the public spaces, annoying the taxi drivers who had lined up in the right place. Public vehicles also could block the first taxi in the rank, making it difficult for them to pull out. Moving the rank up Market Street to that junction would be better, as the taxis would not be obstructed.

Councillor Sue Austen thought that the public spaces could be used for taxis now and then consideration could be given for future provision. The arguments against this being bad for business but the taxis were also a business. Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh acknowledged that the businesses themselves had not offered any objections, which had come from elsewhere.

Councillor Julia Huffer offered a suggestion that the car park at the Paradise Centre could be used as the holding area for taxis. If the site were developed the relevant Section 106 money could be used for that purpose. Then the 'smart' rank system could be looked at later.

The suggested recommendation outlined in paragraph 5.13, to re-organise the parking bays, was proposed and unanimously agreed.

The Committee then agreed that the Senior Licensing Officer liaise with the County Council about improving the Market Place taxi rank.

As the Committee had highlighted other related issues, it was proposed that a review into city centre traffic management be recommended, to cover the issues raised.

It was resolved TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- (i) That the taxi rank and public parking bays in Market Street Ely be re-organised so that the taxi rank be moved along Market Street to the junction of Market Street and High Street Back and the public parking bays be relocated along Market Street towards Market Place;
- (ii) That a review of city centre traffic management be conducted to include investigations into:
 - (a) the possibilities for potential sites within the city centre for a 'holding area' for hackney carriages, and
 - (b) the possibilities for taxi provision at the new leisure village.

It was resolved:

- (iii) That the Senior Licensing Officer be instructed to liaise with Cambridgeshire County Council to improve the taxi rank situated adjacent to the Market Place in Ely.

47. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee considered its forward agenda plan. The Senior Licensing Officer advised the Committee that a report about wheelchair accessible vehicles and one about the Uber court ruling would be presented at the June meeting. No business was expected for the July meeting so it was agreed to cancel that meeting. Additional items for the October meeting were the responses to the Taxi Licensing Policy and the fees review.

The meeting closed at 10:48am.