

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee**

Held at 7.00 pmon Wednesday 29th January, 2025 in the Council Chamber , Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, NN17 1QG

### **Present:-**

Councillor Graham Lawman (Chair)  
Councillor Melanie Coleman  
Councillor Emily Fedorowycz  
Councillor Mark Pengelly

Councillor Robin Carter  
Councillor Geoff Shacklock  
Councillor Lee Wilkes

George Candler, Executive Director Place and Economy  
Iain Smith, Assistant Director Regulatory Services  
Jonathan Waterworth, Assistant Director Assets and Environment  
Amanda Wilcox, Head of Environmental Services  
Ian Achurch, Head of Economic Growth  
Nicole Geary, Sustainability Manager (Interim)  
Carol Mundy, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Committees & Members)  
Emma Robinson, Democratic Services Assistant  
Also in attendance – Councillor Helen Harrison, Peter Stevens and Nick Bolton, Electric Places

The meeting was opened and adjourned for 15 minutes to allow committee members, who had been delayed en route, due to an incident, to join the meeting.

### **81 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies submitted.

### **82 Members' declarations of interest (if any)**

**Resolved** to note that:

- Councillor Pengelly – had held a licence and driven coaches, over five years ago.
- Councillor G Lawman - Director of Shire Community Services.

### **83 Notification of any requests to address the meeting**

The were none.

### **84 Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2025 were received.

**Resolved** that the minutes be approved and signed as a correct record of the meeting.

### **85 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2028**

The circulated report of the Assistant Director Regulatory Services was received to inform committee of the proposed updates to be made to the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2028 following a period of public consultation.

Amanda Wilcox, Head of Environmental Health, presented the report to committee.

She explained that there were several reasons to review the policy to:

- Ensure it reflects the decision of the council's executive made in July 2024 to transition to a single hackney carriage zone from 1 April 2025.
- To consider concerns raised by the public.
- To ensure its cognisance of updated guidance issued by the Department for Transport in June 2022 and November 2023.
- To reflect the updated guidance issued by the Institute of Licensing regarding driver and operator suitability (October 24).
- To consider officer operational experience acquired in the intervening period.

The purpose of the policy is to guide the administration of driver, vehicle and private hire licensing activities under taxi and private hire legislation. It aims to ensure the appropriate balance between the interests of those wishing to obtain or maintain a licence to undertake those activities and the public, particularly those who use taxi or private hire transport, along with supporting and promoting the council's priorities.

The consultation had taken place between the 18 October 2024 and 9 December 2024 with 30 responses being received, the analysis thereof was appended to the report.

Mrs Wilcox explained that in tandem with the review of the taxi policy and in accordance with the Executive decision officers were progressing work integral to the administration of the new single hackney carriage zone, comprising:

- Reviewing the current geographical/knowledge test and securing the services of a third party to deliver this work.
- Reviewing the current Hackney Carriage Byelaws in accordance with Section 236 of the Local Government Act 1972. Officers will present the new byelaws to council for adoption prior to the implementation of the revised taxi policy.

There were also two further supporting pieces of ongoing work to review the current taxi and private hire licensing fees and charges for 2025/26 and to review the hackney carriage ranks across the NNC area to ensure they are correct and properly adopted under licensing and highways legislation.

Mrs Wilcox detailed the updates to the policy made taking into consideration public safety, the needs of the public and to comply with legislation and best practice.

She also informed the committee that the Licensing and Appeals Committee at its meeting held on 14 January 2025 had heard from several speakers who had raised concern over the removal of the ability to retain signage/advertising on vehicles, as they considered that this was important for the safety of the public. Whilst the removal was recommended by the department of transport the current policy allowed signage on vehicles.

Reference was also made to the byelaws which would be consulted on from 31 January 2025 to 1 March 2025 and would be presented to Council on 6 March 2025.

Members thanked officers for the hard work that had gone into producing and updating the policy and discussed the proposed changes, considering most were appropriate.

In summary the following comments were made about the policy:

- A query about some private hire vehicles being registered in other towns was raised, with particular reference to Wolverhampton, and whether this was legal. Officers clarified that it was legal, and historically Wolverhampton's fees and charges had been significantly lower than other towns. Licensing provisions enabled private hire drivers to obtain a licence from any local authority and trade anywhere as long as the private hire operator/driver/ vehicle licence were all obtained from the same local authority.
- With regard to removal of signage/advertising on the vehicles, the committee generally considered that for safety it would be better to retain signage and it would also help users to locate the relevant taxi that had been booked. Officers informed members that certain words were not permitted to be used on signage in accordance with legislation. It was noted that during the consultation process little concern had been raised but it was thought this may have been because it referenced commercial signage and that drivers may not have realised it meant their own vehicle signage.
- In relation to 'the knowledge test' there remained concern that many drivers were worried about this and that due to the availability of SatNavs questions were asked as to whether the test was necessary or whether it could relate to areas. Officers clarified that the test would not be onerous and that it would be for key geographical places such as the Theatre, Hospital or Train Station in each area, it would not go into the detail of where each road in North Northamptonshire was located. De-zoning had been put in place to ensure that all drivers in North Northamptonshire could take passengers anywhere that was requested. Members asked if the knowledge test would be coming back to scrutiny committee for approval and officers clarified that the knowledge test was an operational matter and it was not the intention that it would be scrutinised or returned to committee as this would delay the implementation of the policy. The trade, who officers were working closely with, would be consulted on the test and the committee members of both Licensing and Appeals Committee and Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee would also be consultees and could feedback any concerns.
- A councillor raised environmental concerns over the proposed postponement of the prohibition of petrol or diesel vehicles until 1 January 2030 (first licensing) and 31 December 2035 (renewal) which reflects the government's revised pathway towards vehicles being zero emissions by 2035 commenting this should be reconsidered as the delay would have a considerable impact on the climate. Officers explained that this allowed time for the trade to plan for the change to ZEVs and for these vehicles to be more readily available. From 1 January 2030 all vehicles must be zero emission vehicles. Non-zero emission vehicles will not be renewed after 31 December 2034. Officers noted the concern but had engaged with the trade who experienced difficulties with the availability of suitable vehicles, and these comments had been taken on board during the consultation and should this not be approved within the policy the trade would be unable to meet the standards expected.

The committee noted that there was a huge financial burden to the licensing trade in sourcing these vehicles and that the trade should not be adversely punished with bringing the compliance date forward.

- Questions were also raised regarding wheelchair access and issues around drivers refusing to take dogs, due to allergies or religious reasons. Officers clarified that drivers with allergies had to provide evidence of such via a Doctors letter for an exemption to be granted. With regard to the religious aspect officers were not aware of this being a particular problem and drivers needed to comply with equalities legislation around this.
- With regard to the timescales provided in the documentation it was asked if these could be provided within a table to make it easier for drivers to comply with set dates. The officer confirmed she could do that.

The Executive Director of Place and Economy thanked the committee for the comments made and confirmed that the Executive member, Councillor Brackenbury, would present the policy to the executive and that the key comments and concerns made would be added to the Executive paper.

**Resolved** that the Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee recommends:

- (i) to Executive and Council that the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2028 be adopted, taking into consideration the comments regarding the vehicle signage and vehicle advertising remaining for safety reasons and subject to a table also being included within the policy of timescales of implementation dates;
- (ii) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Place and Economy to make any minor corrections to the policy.
- (iii) That delegated authority to postpone the planned commencement date of the policy, due to be 1 April 2025, be given to the Executive Director of Place and Economy in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, to ensure it is implemented in tandem with the effective date of a new set of Hackney Carriage Byelaws, which are subject to a separate adoption process and approval by Council.

## **86 Draft Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030**

The circulated report of the Assistant Director of Assets and Environment was received to provide a summary of the key areas of focus in the appended draft Climate Change Strategy, along with the objectives to provide a green sustainable environment.

The report detailed that the need for action to be taken to enhance, protect and prevent further environmental decline had been declared by the council in July 2021 and the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan had been developed.

Public consultation had been undertaken between 16 September and 20 October 2024 with the key findings from the consultation being analysed and appended to the report.

The report was presented to the committee by the Assistant Director, Mr Waterworth and Councillor Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Climate and the Green Environment.

Councillor Harrison thanked her predecessor Councillor Harriet Pentland for all the work that she had put into the development of the strategy over the last four years and also thanked Electric Places for their input and guidance.

It was explained that there were six key areas of focus within the strategy as follows:

- Homes and the built environment
- Energy
- Transport
- Nature, food and farming
- Green economy
- Waste

All of these were further detailed in the strategy which focused on achieving net zero by 2050

The next steps were for the Executive to receive the strategy and for a roadmap and action plan to be formed to bring the sectors together.

The Executive Director of Place and Economy informed the committee that the strategy would sit alongside the Carbon Management Plan which was already in place.

The chair and committee thanked officers for the report.

Some of the points raised are summarised below:

- It was noted that many properties in urban areas could not have charging points installed due to the nature of the location of the home not being suitable for charging points an option could be to have cabling laid under pavements and whether this could be considered. Officers clarified that this may be an option but cautioned that it would be challenging and costly to do. Officers were aware that more and faster charging points were required to encourage the use of more electric vehicles.

(Councillor Pengelly left the meeting at 8.55pm).

- It was commented that planning policy, should automatically have EV charging points installed by developers and that more pressure needed to be placed on the inclusion of solar panels too and that developers needed to ensure this was progressed.
- Food waste –the committee commented that not all areas in North Northamptonshire had a food waste collection service and that this needed to be considered. Officers clarified that food waste would be collected from every household from 2027.
- Committee also considered that an education programme needed to be implemented about where waste should go to ensure there was more recycling across the area as when talking to residents many did not know how to recycle properly.
- Concern was expressed that whilst the strategy was good it did not go far enough and take effect quickly enough and that work needed to start immediately to implement a lot of what was being suggested. Work with partners needed to commence quickly, there was little being communicated so better communication was required, and planning policy and the local plan needed to be updated for improvements to be put in place by developers. There needed to be more work on cycleways, to improve connectivity, the promotion of food production via allotments was also important, along with the seeding of grass verges and encouraging less transportation of waste. Businesses were reporting that they did not know who to go to for support with green

initiatives and it was considered that more engagement was required to bring the vision to fruition more quickly.

In response to the comments Councillor Harrison thanked the committee and appreciated its enthusiasm to move this forward quickly. She clarified, however, that the plan needed to be developed with others and that engagement about working together and implementation would be worked through over the coming months.

The Executive Director thanked the committee for the points raised and confirmed that the local plan was under development and further options for the future were being considered.

**Resolved** that Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Commends the positive progress made toward the development of a Climate Change Strategy for the council;
- (ii) Notes the comments made by the committee to progress the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy and actions contained therein as quickly as possible.

**87 Close of meeting**

There being no further business the chair declared the meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Chair .....

Date .....