

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE**

At a meeting of the **Licensing and Regulatory Committee** held on Wednesday,
18 December 2024 at 1:30 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor I Hutchinson
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

J Beynon
T Cessford
B Gallacher
C Hardy
S Lee

C Seymour
A Sharp
M Swinbank
A Wallace

OFFICERS

H Bowers
M Bulman
T Hardy
C MacDonald

Democratic Services Officer
Solicitor
Licensing Manager
Business Compliance & Public
Safety Manager

Press: 1

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chicken, Foster, Humphrey and Parry.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee held on Wednesday 23 October 2024, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

14. QUARTERLY ACTIVITY UPDATE

Members were provided with an update on licences determined over the last quarter by the Subcommittee and delegated officers.

Ch.'s Initials.....

At the meeting on 23 October, the Committee received information outlining licences that had been granted and renewed over the previous quarter.

Included within the Appendix of the report for the quarter July to September 2024, were licences determined by Subcommittee and delegated officers. Also included was a comparison of the previous year.

The officers were thanked for the work carried out in providing the figures.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

15. DECISION-MAKING SCHEME

As requested by members at the last committee meeting, the schematic form provided attached to the report provided clarity on how decisions were made within the Authority.

Members were provided with an explanation of the approach to decision making and how this linked to the adopted legal scheme of officer delegation.

In response to a query, members were informed that the Committee was charged with making recommendations on policy and any recommendations made would be presented to Cabinet for approval.

A member welcomed the report but stated that concerns had been raised at the previous meeting about the change in the decision-making process for licensing and regulatory committee and would not support the schematic chart in its current form.

Some concerns were raised regarding lack of communication of events to Ward Councillors and whether the Licensing Team was debriefed following an event, the Committee was assured that this was the case.

In response to lack of communication, Local Councillors and Parish Town Councils were not statutory consultees and were not required to be consulted on any events.

All the concerns raised would be taken on board.

RESOLVED that the Committee endorse the schematic included in the Appendix to the report.

16. PASSENGER VEHICLES NOT WITHIN SCOPE OF THE LICENSING SCHEME

Members were provided with an information report requested by the Committee outlining the law relating to passenger vehicles that were not within the scope of the taxi and private hire vehicle licensing scheme for local authorities.

A vehicle used for hire or reward that seated up to 8 passengers was legally considered to be a regulated taxi or private hire vehicle which were small vehicles licensed by the local authority, including vehicles involving executive travel, chauffeur services, limousines and some school and day centre transport services.

A vehicle used for hire which seated 9 or more passengers was legally considered to be a public services vehicle (PSV), such as buses and coaches, licensed by the area Traffic Commissioner and administered by the Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency (DVSA).

Exemptions available to relaxation to the applicable licensing schemes were outlined in paragraph 5.3 of the report.

In response to queries regarding road worthiness and public safety, members were informed that although there may be exemptions outside of the MoT scheme for older vehicles, however, this did not apply to the policy requirement adopted by the Authority for the licensing of hackney carriage or private hire vehicles.

Members thanked the officers for an informative report.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

17. CERTIFICATION OF SPORTS GROUNDS

Members considered a report outlining the framework for the regulation of sports grounds and sought approval for the development of a specific policy.

The Authority was responsible for regulating sports grounds and the Committee had a responsibility for certifying those sports grounds that fell within the scope of the regulatory framework.

Major incidents had occurred over the years at sports grounds nationally that had shaped legislation to improve public safety e.g., The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 was introduced following the disaster at Ibrox Park, Glasgow in 1971 and The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 was introduced following the fire at Valley Parade, Bradford in 1985.

Sports grounds not falling within the scope of the above regulatory framework were otherwise regulated by the Authority under health and safety and fire legislation.

In Northumberland there were a number of sports grounds across the county that varied in nature:

- Designated sports grounds – none
- Regulated stands – two venues

- Others – A broad range including non-league football clubs in Alnwick, Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth, Morpeth, Poneland, Prudhoe and Hexham racecourse.

Members were assured that the Authority’s obligations in relation to regulations were being adhered to.

The Authority had indicated its plans to strengthen its approach to the regulation of events that took place in the county and the intended future approach was set out in a report presented to Cabinet in September 2024. Attached as Appendix to the report.

In response to questions from members relating to monitoring of stands - Environmental Health were responsible for the health and safety of the stands.

With reference to what powers the Council had in relation to safety at a Temporary Event Notice, members were informed that the Safety Advisory Group did not have any enforcement power but more of a partnership approach. Any events would be reviewed afterwards.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and the proposal to develop a specific policy covering the regulation of sports grounds, as outlined in section 5 of the report be agreed.

18. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

Members were asked to review the future work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

19. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED that the future dates be noted.

20. URGENT BUSINESS

The Committee was informed that a Government White Paper on the Devolution Deal would possibly affect future regulation of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles. Officers were currently considering the information.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____