

Swale Borough Council

General Licensing Committee - 9th April 2019

Della Fackrell, Resilience & Licensing Manager

Licensing key updates

6.1 OLEV/ULEV grants (Della Fackrell)

KCC were successful in their bid to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) for the grant of £180,000. This grant was to cover six district areas including Swale and was for 75% of the cost of the scheme. The suppliers of the units are happy to provide the 25% funding in return for a revenue share of the usage. By providing match funding and having a revenue share in the units, suppliers will have an incentive to ensure the units are well maintained and in operation. KCC will ensure there is a cap included in the contract and also a cap on the charge to taxis.

This grant is specifically to provide a rapid charging point (charges 0 – 80% in 30 minutes) for Ultra Low Emission Taxis. During the bid phase we nominated some possible locations for the charging point and have since reassessed the possibility of locating the point at Morrisons in Sittingbourne. Clearly the charging point needs to be away from the rank for access for private hire vehicles and using a public car park will affect the councils income with a loss of a space. We are currently waiting for an update from Economic Development on a contact for Morrisons.

KCC will be leading on the procurement of the units with liaison with us. This will include the supply, install and operation of the contract to ensure consistency throughout the project and ensure interoperability for taxi drivers. The units are to be installed by the end of March 2020.

KCC have proposed that ownership of the units within each District should be with the taxi licensing authority (once the installation is complete and units are operational). This would ensure that each District has overall control over the operation of the units within their District including rates for charging for use.

It would also mean that a proportion of revenue generated would be retained by the District. This will need to be determined later dependent on location of the unit as we may not want to inherit maintenance responsibility of something we have not commissioned nor that is on land not owned by Swale BC.

There is the possibility that these units can also be made available to the public by pre-booking through an app operated by the provider. As we only have one electric vehicle in the borough we are likely to make the point available for public use and will reassess when we have an increased number of electric taxis.

6.2 Taxis (Mo Bauluck)

- The taxi policy that was formally adopted to become effective as of 1st July 2018 is working well. The expanded penalty points system in particular allows licensing officers to issue penalty points that are more suited to the transgression
- The Street Knowledge Test (SKT) is now conducted online. This saves officer time in having to mark papers, allows for consistency in marking as well as candidates being told very quickly whether they have been successful or not. The new test involves the screening of a film and the answering questions on the subject of safeguarding. To assist candidates a PowerPoint has been prepared that is available on the Council website and also given to candidates before the film is screened. The pass mark for the particular section of the SKT is 100%.
- Because of the roadworks in Sittingbourne, taxi driver meetings are currently being held at 3 monthly intervals. All issues discussed are then entered onto a grid and updated with the outcome of the discussion and sent to drivers on a regular basis through taxi newsletters. We liaise with Spirit of Sittingbourne, Erith, Network Rail and Indigo/Saba and invite them to our meetings so that drivers can ask questions of them direct. At the last meeting of 2nd April 2019 a representative of Erith attended.

CURRENT AND FUTURE WORK

6.3 Kent Community Alcohol Partnership (KCAP) (Mark Reynolds)

The Sheerness Town Centre and Leysdown Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAP) are being put in place to help cut incidents of underage alcohol sales, underage drinking and to encourage responsible drinking amongst young adults.

A key aspect of the partnership will be to break down the barriers between retailers, publicans and the enforcement agencies and to recognise that by working together with the wider community, including local young people and their parents, everyone can make a difference.

The CAP's will see the Community Policing Team, Trading Standards and Swale BC working in partnership with the licensed trade, schools and youth workers. The project will be supported by Community Alcohol Partnerships CiC, the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group (RASG), which represents major retailers, and is backed by the Wine and Spirit Association. The date of the launch of the project is yet to be decided but is likely to be Summer 2019.

6.4 Local Area Profile (Mo Bauluck)

Members will recall that at the latest Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles was presented to this Committee during 2018 and was formally adopted by full Council on 14 November 2018.

The Gambling Commission recommends that local authorities carry out an assessment of their local environment called a 'Local Area Profile' to identify the local risk of gambling-related harm and to inform the Statement of Principles. Risk in this context includes potential and actual risk and can take into account possible future and emerging risks. In order to ensure that this document could be kept up to date it was decided that it would be prepared separately from the Statement of Principles.

Officers are currently working on preparing on a Local Area Profile and are taking into account the following:

- Location schools, sixth form colleges, youth centres etc with reference to the potential risk of under-age gambling
- Hostels or support services for vulnerable people, such as those with addiction issues or who are homeless, given the greater risk of problem gambling among these groups
- Any known information about issues with problem gambling
- The surrounding night time economy, and possible interaction with gambling premises
- The socio-economic makeup of the area
- The density of different types of gambling premises in certain locations
- Specific types of gambling premises in the local area (e.g. betting shops, arcades etc)

It is anticipated that the LAP will be presented to General Licensing Committee on 9 July 2019.

6.5 Street Trading Policy (Chris Hills)

The licensing team are still working to the Street Trading Policy 2013- 2016 when issuing Street Trading Consents so the policy is badly in need of review.

It has become apparent that the current policy does not conform to the legislation under which Street Trading Consents need to be granted (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982). Previously aspirations and historic practices were confused with law and included within the current policy and the draft that is currently being worked up by officers will need to address this issue so that the new policy will be a robust document that can stand up to legal challenge whilst not impeding the economic development of the Borough through its vibrant markets. The licensing team are working closely with officers from the Legal Department and Economic Development in this regard.

It is anticipated that a draft Street Trading Policy will be presented to Members of both the Policy Development Review Committee on 19 June 2019 and General Licensing Committee on 9 July 2019 prior to a formal 12 week consultation before being formally adopted.