

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for City Services held at 2.30 pm on
Wednesday, 26 January 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor P Hetherton (Cabinet Member)
Councillor G Lloyd (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Other Member: Councillor S Nazir (for Minute 54 below)

Employees:

C Archer, Traffic Management
M Coggins, Taxi Licensing
S Evans, Transport and Innovation
V Jon-Stevens, Taxi Licensing
L Knight, Law and Governance
R Parkes, Law and Governance
M Salmon, Law and Governance
M Wilkinson, Traffic Management

Apology: Councillor L Bigham, Chair, Communities and
Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)

Public Business

52. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

53. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th December, 2021 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

54. Petition - Insufficient Parking in Peel Street

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways concerning a petition, bearing 14 signatures, requesting that the build-outs and dangerous trees in Peel Street be removed to create additional on-street parking. The petition was supported by Councillor S Nazir, a Foleshill Ward Councillor, who attended the meeting and spoke in support of the petitioners. The petition organiser was invited but was unable to attend.

The Cabinet Member had considered the petition prior to this meeting and requested that the petition was dealt with by determination letter. On receipt of the determination letter, the petition organiser had advised that she wanted the issue to be considered at a Cabinet Member for City Services meeting. A copy of the determination letter was set out at Appendix B to the report.

The report indicated that Peel Street was a residential road off Stoney Stanton Road. Sections of the kerb on the southern side of the road were built out to create grass verges with trees. A location plan was set out at Appendix A to the report.

The cost of any changes to on-street parking provision was funded from the Highways Maintenance and Investment Capital Programme budget through the Local Transport Plan. The scheduling of works was based on the priority of the scheme and the funds available. Due to limited budgets, the Council was unable to fund the creation of additional on-street parking in Peel Street. The trees in the street were inspected every three years to see if any maintenance was required. The most recent inspection took place in August 2021 and all remedial works were completed by November.

Councillor Nazir reported that the grass verges in Peel Street had been installed in the mid-1980s against the wishes of local residents at the time. She referred to recent developments in the area which included a number of new flats and to other buildings in the vicinity which all contributed to the parking issues. In addition, a significant number of properties had been converted into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Due to the narrow road only one vehicle could go along the street and it was difficult for the refuse vehicles. Similar problems were being experienced by the residents of Cobden Street. Councillor Nazir referred to the fly-tipping that was occurring. She highlighted that the removal of the unwanted verges and trees would allow for a wider road and the option of creating much needed parking spaces.

In response, the officer reported that the verges had been introduced in the street on the grounds of safety. The issue of HMOs and parking was a problem that occurred across the city. It was reiterated that there was no budget for the requested works. Councillor Hetherington reminded of the Council's intention to keep as many of the city's trees as possible, not remove them.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The petitioners' concerns be noted.

(2) The actions confirmed by the determination letter to the petition organiser (as detailed in paragraph 1.5 of the report) be endorsed.

55. On Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme - Experimental Traffic Regulation Order Objection Report

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways concerning two objections that had been received to an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order advertised on 22nd April 2021 for two fast chargers on Browning Road and two fast charges on Billing Road which became operational on 3rd May. A summary of the issues contained in the two objections and the responses were set out at an appendix to the report. Both objectors were invited to the meeting but were unable to attend.

The report indicated that Coventry was at the cutting edge of the automotive industry and a leader in innovation. Electric vehicles lay at the heart of this development and following a number of successful bids, the city council had

installed over 403 residential electric chargepoints city wide. A further 155 chargepoints were due to commence installation from January 2022 and would be operational by end of July 2022. This programme was intended to future-proof the city's transport infrastructure for the increase in electric vehicle ownership in line with national Government policy, with the Government having committed to ending sales of new diesel- and petrol-powered vehicles from 2030.

Electric car sales were increasing exponentially, and the Council had recognised the need to act to future-proof the city's transport system for electric vehicles. This included installing Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points on residential streets where residents had no off-street parking to give people the chance to charge an EV at or near their home even when they didn't have a private driveway.

The Cabinet Member was informed that to date, the City Council had secured £2.12 million to support this programme, and Coventry had the highest number of EV charge points of any city in the UK outside London.

As part of the initiative, the City Council had installed two 22kW charging bollards on Browning Road and two 22kW charging bollards on Billing Road with an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order operational 6.00 am to 10.00 pm, for electric vehicles to park for up to four hours no return within four hours operational from 3rd May 2021 with a six month objection period which expired on 3rd November. These restrictions were necessary to allow for the visitors or residents to move their electric car once charged to make the facility accessible to other residents/visitors.

The report referred to the consultation exercise which had been undertaken which involved sending out 825 street news to the area for Billing Road (Zone S) and 194 street news for the Browning Road area (Zone T) including carrying out drop-in-sessions in each Zone and then sending out a further street news with an update following the initial consultation.

The report referred to the two objections that had been, with further details being set out in the appendices to the report. It was reported that some of the issues raised were general in nature and not relevant to the introduction of these individual chargepoints.

RESOLVED that, having considered the objections received to the City of Coventry (Various Locations Phase 10) (Electric Charging Places) (Experimental) Order 2021, approval be given for the Order to be made permanent.

56. Recommendations Following Consultation over the Department for Transport Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which sought approval to adopt recommendations following a consultation exercise over the Department for Transport (DfT) Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards which were published in July 2020. The 12 week consultation expired on 18th August 2021 and 219 responses were received.

The report indicated that the DfT recommended that local authorities undertook six-monthly enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks on licensed drivers and that drivers should be encouraged to join the DBS update service. This service enabled the licensing authority to have the facility to check the DBS of a driver online to check if there have been any additional convictions. Taxi Licensing currently charged drivers £54 (including a small administrative charge) for an enhanced DBS check which occurred every three years at the same time as the driver renews their licence. The Cabinet Member was informed that drivers had been given the option to join the update service but very few have chosen to do it. The report highlighted the financial implications for drivers along with the benefits of the scheme. There were circumstances in which individuals were not permitted by the DBS to subscribe to the update service and it was proposed that these drivers would be subject to an enhanced DBS check every six months and would be issued a short-term driver licence and badges lasting six months, which were extended by six months upon provision of a new DBS certificate.

The DfT also recommended that vehicle proprietors and private hire operators, who act as drivers, who do not already undertake an enhanced disclosure, supply a basic disclosure annually. Results from the survey were 34.7% in favour of the proposals and 60.3% against. The report recommended adopting the proposals in full, in the interests of public safety. Four options were put forward for implementing the DBS service for existing drivers and the Cabinet Member agreed with the recommended option B: 'wait 12 months before drivers were contacted, to ask for evidence of continual subscription to the DBS Update Service' - this would mean a 12-month delay to the implementation of the Standards but would provide drivers with one year's warning about the upcoming cost.

The DfT recommended that joint authorisation protocols with other licensing authorities were promoted to allow the City Council to take action against vehicles and drivers that were licensed in other areas. Reference was made to the Council's involvement in the Taxi Harmonisation Group (taxi licensing areas of all the seven West Midlands Councils) and had discussed joint authorisation protocols between all the West Midlands Councils. Ongoing discussions were also taking place with Wolverhampton Council. 84.5% of the survey returns supported this proposal.

The report referred to the recommendation that licensing authorities should use the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) NR3 Register of Revocations and Refusals for local authorities whereby revocations and refusals by Committee and/or the Courts were entered onto a register which other local authorities could access. The Taxi Harmonisation Group had agreed that all seven local authorities in the West Midlands would adopt this DfT recommendation. 78.5% of survey responses were in favour of the proposal.

A further recommendation from the DfT was that licence holders would inform local authorities within 48 hours of an arrest and release, charge or conviction of any sexual offence, any offence involving dishonesty or violence and any motoring offence. 68.5% of survey responses were in support which would mean a consistent approach nationally and was appropriate on the grounds of public safety. It was also recommended that the current Committee guidelines on

Convictions were amended and updated to reflect the recommendations in the DfT report.

The final recommendation was that CCTV cameras should be a mandatory requirement for all taxis (hackney carriages) and private hire vehicles licensed by the City Council. The report detailed the financial implications associated with the proposal which recommended that CCTV systems should be operated by the Council and be capable of recording both visual and audio data. The Council already allowed its vehicle proprietors to have CCTV systems, if required, providing that the proprietor adhered to the CCTV guidance given in the Vehicle Proprietors' Information Document. Also, the vehicle proprietor/driver was required to register with the Information Commissioner as Data Controller. Further details on the current requirements were set out in an appendix to the report. Only 25.8% of survey respondents were in support of the proposal. Consequently, it was recommended that, in view of the survey, CCTV was not made mandatory, however that the current voluntary use of CCTV systems was confirmed as policy.

The report put forward the suggestion that a Taxi Licensing Policy document was sanctioned to reflect the current policies.

Councillor Hetherington expressed support for the recommendations concerning the Department for Transport (DfT) Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards. In light of the lack of support highlighted in the survey responses relating to the DBS checks and the use of CCTV, she suggested that a meeting be held involving the Cabinet Member, officers and representatives from the Trade Unions to discuss the adopted recommendations and the reasons for adoption. This would allow for the opportunity for concerns to be raised and issues understood.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The Department for Transport proposal for six monthly driver enhanced DBS disclosures and annual vehicle proprietor and private hire operator (including partners and directors) basic DBS disclosures be fully adopted in the interests of public safety and approval be given for option B to be implemented (as detailed in the report).

(2) The continued promotion of joint authorisation protocols and further discussion with the Taxi Harmonisation Group and Wolverhampton Metropolitan Council be agreed.

(3) The use of the NAFN NR3 Register of Revocations on the grounds of public safety be authorised.

(4) Licence holders must notify Taxi Licensing within 48 hours of an arrest and release, charge or conviction of any sexual offence, any offence involving dishonesty or violence and any motoring offence.

(5) The Department for Transport committee guidelines on convictions be fully adopted and officers be requested to update the current guidelines accordingly.

(6) The current voluntary guidelines on the use of CCTV in Coventry be adopted as policy.

(7) Agreement be given for a Taxi Licensing Policy document to be produced to reflect current policies.

(8) Arrangements be put in place for a meeting involving the Cabinet Member, Councillor Hetherton, officers and representatives from the Trade Unions to discuss the adopted recommendations and the reasons for adoption.

57. Petitions Determined by Letter and Petitions Deferred Pending Further Investigations

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways that provided a summary of the recent petitions received that were being responded to by way of determination letter or holding letter. Details of the individual petitions were set out in an appendix attached to the report and included details of the actions being taken in response to the petitions. The report was submitted for monitoring and transparency purposes.

The report indicated that each petition had been dealt with on an individual basis, with the Cabinet Member considering advice from officers on appropriate action to respond to the petitioners' request. When it had been decided to respond to the petition without formal consideration at a Cabinet Member meeting, both the relevant Councillor sponsoring the petition (if any) and/or the petition organiser/spokesperson could still request that their petition be the subject of a Cabinet Member report. A total of 7 determination letters and 4 holding letters were to be issued.

Members noted that where holding letters were being sent, this was because further investigation work was required. Once matters had been investigated either a follow up letter would be sent, or a report submitted to a future Cabinet Member meeting.

RESOLVED that the actions being taken by officers as detailed in the appendix to the report, in response to the petitions received, be endorsed.

58. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

59. Any other items of Public Business

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.55 pm)