

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Date: 18 March 2020

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors: Barbara Jenney (Chairman)
Glenvil Greenwood-Smith (Vice-Chairman)

Tony Boto
Richard Gell
Helen Howell
Bert Jackson

Steven North
Geoff Shacklock
Lee Wilkes

459. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Bert Jackson and Lee Wilkes to their first meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman also thanked officers for all of the work they did to support the Committee and a lot of work was also being undertaken in the background on preparations for unitary. Rita Groves was thanked for giving the hard hitting presentation on safeguarding at the meeting of the Council in January.

460. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sylvia Hobbs, Dorothy Maxwell, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Peter Wathen and PC David Bryan.

461. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

462. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

463. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

No questions were submitted.

464. DRUGS DOG OPERATIONS

The Licensing Enforcement Officer gave a verbal report which provided the Committee with an update on a recent drugs dog operation and explanation on how they worked.

A drugs dog operation had been held in November 2019 and had been paid for by Raunds Town Council. The operation involved the Licensing Enforcement Officer (LEO), a police officer, seven special police officers and a dog handler. 15 premises had been visited and there had been 11 stop searches resulting in one seizure. The LEO was required to be in attendance as the police did not have automatic right of entry and had to be allowed in the premises. The operation had generated good media attention and the next operation would be funded by Rushden Town Council.

In response to a question, the LEO confirmed that if a large quantity of drugs was recovered and it was clear that somebody was dealing, then it would be dealt with there and then. If a small amount was recovered, then the person's details would be taken and it would be dealt with later.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal report be noted.

465. UPDATE ON THE CENTRAL LICENSING ADMINISTRATION UNIT

The Licensing Enforcement Officer gave a verbal update on the Central Licensing Administration Unit (CLAU).

The CLAU was shared licensing administration service which had been in operation since 2005. In 2006 it had received an APSE award for best public partnership. There were currently four partners, following the withdrawal of Daventry District Council. It operated from a single site at ENC and therefore achieved economies of scale on overheads, for example accommodation, IT and HR. The unit provided a model of working which was likely to be copied for other services moving into unitary.

The Unit was the first point of contact for applicants and agents and the team provided advice to guide them through the application process. Over the past year it had processed over 2000 applications. Its key tasks included:

- Consultation with responsible authorities
- Production of licences, permits and registrations
- Issue of reminder notifications for renewals
- Administration of fees and annual billing
- Maintenance of licensing public register
- Production of reports to support compliance and enforcement actions

The Unit had recently introduced a number of new processes:

- Animal Welfare Licensing
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Split fees – following recent case law
- Integration of taxi licensing into the unit
- Progressing to paper light working

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

466. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because exempt information, as defined under paragraphs 1 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 may be disclosed.

467. COURIER FRAUD

The Licensing Enforcement Officer provided a verbal update on courier fraud.

The initiative was run by Northamptonshire Police and other agencies, such as the National Anti Fraud Network. Courier fraud occurred when a fraudster contacted victims, who were usually elderly or vulnerable members of the community, by phoning them and pretending to be a police officer or bank official. Taxi drivers were often used unwittingly by the fraudsters and this subject was now covered as part of the application process and tests.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

468. UPDATE REPORT FROM NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE

This item was deferred in the absence of PC David Bryan.

469. REVIEW OF RECENT LICENSING PANELS

The Committee noted the outcome of the Licensing Panels which had recently been held.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Chairman