

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17 June 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Kane (Chair), Ali, Curry, Haszeldine, Lawley, Lee, Mahmud, Ray and Toms

APOLOGIES – Councillors Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Donoghue and K Nicholson,

ABSENT – Councillor Dulston

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jim Langley (Principal Lawyer - Litigation), Brian Murray (Assistant Licensing Manager), Colin Dobson (Licensing Manager), James McAllister (Democratic Officer) and Anthony Hall (Superintendent Registrar)

LG25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

LG26 TO CONSIDER THE DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/26

RESOLVED – That for the remainder of this Municipal Year the timings of meetings of this General Licensing Committee be held at 9:30 a.m on the agreed dates.

LG27 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 APRIL 2025

Submitted – the Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Committee held on 29 April 2025.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Licensing committee held on 29 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

LG28 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 APRIL 2025

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 29 April 2025

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 29 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

LG29 APPLICATION FOR/RENEWAL OF LICENCE FOR PREMISES TO BE APPROVED AS A VENUE(S) FOR MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS - REDWORTH HALL HOTEL

The Assistant Director, Law and Governance and Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration an application for / to the renewal of a license for the Redworth Hotel to be approved as a venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships in accordance with the provisions of The Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994); the Civil Partnership Act (2004); the Marriage and Civil

Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 and 2021; and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013).

The submitted report gave a summary of the Redworth Hotel as an approved venue, the designated rooms and maximum capacity for each room for civil marriage and civil partnerships.

RESOLVED – That the licence for the Redworth Hotel as an approved premise for civil marriage and civil partnerships be granted for three years from 2025 or a further three years from 2025 and that the places designated where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place indoors at the premises and the maximum of numbers of persons who can attend those marriage and civil partnerships continue to be:

The Great Hall – 150 Maximum Capacity
Kelvington Suite – 100 Maximum Capacity
Prince Bishop Suite – 280 Maximum Capacity
The Minstrels Gallery – 20 Maximum Capacity
The Restaurant – 100 Maximum Capacity
The 1744 Room – 80 Maximum Capacity
Cocktail Bar – 50 Maximum Capacity
The Summerhouse (outside structure) - 6 Maximum Capacity

LG30 TAXI POLICY

The Executive Director, Economy and Public Protection, submitted a report (previously circulated) regarding a review of policy and conditions relating to Hackney Carriages, Private Hire Vehicles and their Drivers and Operators. The purpose of this report was to provide Members with sufficient context to provide approval for the Officers to undertake a public consultation on Darlington Borough Council's Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licencing Policy. The reasoning for this being to ensure that the policy remains in line with the five-year Department for Transport (DfT henceforth) guidance for a policy review.

The Licencing Manager delivered the aforementioned report, and began by discussing the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy approved by Council in 2020 and implemented in 2021. The Licencing Manager reminded Members of the context of this time-period, alluding to the difficulties faced by taxi drivers following Covid-19. With this in mind, the previous taxi policy resulted in changes to assist the trade (without compromising public safety) in the form of removal of age restrictions replaced with Euro 6 engine requirements, removal of the topographical test for a private hire driver's licence, and rear window tint approval for standard production line vehicles.

Members were also informed that on 12 May 2025, the DfT announced that a consultation would soon be launched to consider transferring taxi and private hire vehicle licensing responsibility to all Local Transport Authorities. The rationale behind this proposed change is that local oversight would enhance regulatory consistency, enable more effective enforcement, and achieve greater economies of scale, thereby reducing incentives for drivers to obtain licences outside their usual working areas. The Licencing Manager Informed Members that If this was to be introduced, this would require a new Tees Valley wide policy.

The Licencing Manager made Members aware that Licensing had consulted with representatives of the trade to establish what changes they would like to see. The proposed changes were provided in the report, and also explicated at length by the Licencing Manager. Notable proposed changes included Mandatory Disability Awareness Training for all new applicants and those renewing their licence, installation of CCTV for in-vehicle recording to be made a mandatory requirement, all drivers to provide customers with the option to pay by card, remove the requirement for six-monthly vehicle testing and replace it with an annual test for vehicles under 3 years old, Remove the requirement for front plate of private hire vehicles, To consider the introduction of a points-based system, which allows minor breaches of rules to be recorded and considered in context, and remove the requirement for each vehicle to contain a fire extinguisher.

Members then entered into discussion with the officers regarding such proposed changes. Concerns were voiced regarding the legality of requiring the option to pay by card, officers responded citing a legality consultation which is to be carried out, but also reassured the Committee that this would not mandate card payments, merely the option to do so.

Members voiced further concerns regarding vehicle testing, and their reluctance for this requirement to be removed in its current format, and also sought clarity regarding “minor” infringements alluded to in the points system proposal.

Member attention then turned to the requirement of in-vehicle CCTV recordings, with concerns regarding drivers being recorded in their own time in addition to who’s responsibility it is to handle the data of the recordings.

Recommended - The Statutory Licensing Committee approves and authorises the commencement of a public consultation process relating to the consideration and adoption of a new policy.

RESOLVED – The General Licencing Committee approved and authorised the commencement of a public consultation process.