

Licensing & Regulatory Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Licensing & Regulatory Committee** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **Wednesday 30 May 2018** at **9.30am** when there were present:

Mrs S C Gurney – Chairman

Mr R Knowles

Mrs B Rix

The applicants (as identified in minute no: 4 below and in minute no: 6 in the exempt appendix to the signed copy of these Minutes) attended the meeting for their respective applications.

Also in attendance were Mr D Lowens (the Committee's legal advisor), the Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager, the Technical Officer (Licensing Enforcement) and the Committee Officer (DM).

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Mrs Gurney	4 – Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 – Private Hire Vehicle Licensing	Non pecuniary, local choice interest, the representative from Desira was known to her.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

3 NON-EXEMPT MINUTES

The non-exempt Minutes of the meetings held on 2 May and 15 May 2018 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976 – PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING

Mr Leon Davies and Mr James Phillips trading as Zero Taxis and Mr Alex Bilham from Desira were in attendance for this item

The Committee considered an application to make an exception to the Council's Private Hire Vehicle and Hackney Carriage Policy and Conditions (PHVHCPC) in respect of the engine size of an eco-friendly vehicle.

Section 7 of the PHVHCPCs stated: the Council encourages the use of eco-friendly vehicles. Any application to license a vehicle with an engine capacity of less than 1300cc will be considered on its own merits. On 23 March 2018, Mr Davies and Mr Phillips contacted the Licensing Office in respect of licensing a Nissan Leaf electric vehicle. Mr Davies and Mr Phillips were not currently an established Private Hire Operator but were intending to trade as Zero Taxis. The vehicle had been inspected by Licensing Officers who had determined that, other than the engine capacity, the vehicle complied with the standard licensing requirements. Mr Davies and Mr Phillips requested that the Committee gave consideration to licensing electric vehicles in line with their business model of providing zero emission Private Hire Vehicles.

The Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager presented his report in full and commented that the Council currently had a number of operators using hybrid vehicles within their companies but this was the first application in respect of a fully electric vehicle.

It was noted that, in addition to the Nissan Leaf, a number of manufacturers were now marketing electric cars. The purchase cost of these vehicles was such that it was still prohibitive for some companies to consider them.

Mr Davies informed Members that he was ex-air force and had experience in the renewable energy sector working off-shore. He often used taxis in the Netherlands and Holland where use of electric cars was extensive. He felt there was a niche in the market to develop use of electric cars in Norwich. Mr Davies and Mr Phillips outlined the proposals for the company and explained how they would manage the work undertaken by their two electric vehicles by way of local contract work with a range of businesses and organisations (for example journeys to and from the airport and train station). A number of organisations had already been contacted some of which had direct access to charging points. A number of other charging points were available and easily accessible by electric payment methods and grants were available to help with the cost of installing points. The company was very mindful of the constraints on long distance journeys and work would focus in and around Norwich. Two charging points would be available at the proposed operating base both of which benefitted from connection to solar power which would allow for overnight charging at virtually no cost during the summer and for limited cost during the winter. The electricity company supplying power to the operating base used 100% renewable sources to supply electricity. Whilst he had not worked in the private hire industry before, Mr Davies confirmed that he had researched a company in Wales which now operated 5 electric cars and had shadowed a company in Cornwall to see how it was run. With regard to questions about the limited capacity of the battery and the safety of the travelling public, Mr Davies commented that the careful management of the work accepted would avoid any issues. In practice, the normal average daily mileage of a typical taxi driver was between 140-160 miles and the electric car was capable of 150-170 miles on one full charge. The daily operations would also allow for an overlap of the two cars. Mr

Bilham commented that the cars were capable of receiving up to 80% of their full charge in 40 minutes if they did need topping up during the day. When stationary, the cars did not use their charge, and so there would be no problem if they were held up in traffic. The cars had an air source heat pump and electric seats to provide heating. Air conditioning had a nominal drain on the car's battery. The life expectancy of the current cars was estimated to be 8 years or 100,000 miles. A first generation electric car used for taxi work and being charged three times per day had been driven for 160,000 miles. Despite the initial high purchase costs, the running costs associated with an electric car were low and this could be reflected in the fares charged to customers.

The Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager invited Members to review the application and determine the matter.

Mr Davies commented that much research had been undertaken by him and his partner in conjunction with Nissan into the operation of a taxi company using electric cars and careful thought given to the management of the work and the use of contract work to avoid any issues.

After consideration of all the information presented to them about the Nissan Leaf and the company's management proposals, and having regard to public safety, Members agreed to grant an exception to Section 7 of the Private Hire Vehicle and Hackney Carriage Policy and Conditions in respect of vehicles with an engine capacity of less than 1300cc in order to licence Nissan Leaf electric vehicles with the specification set out on pages 39 – 40 of the report. The operating centre for any such vehicle shall have at least one charging point present and maintained during the period of the relevant Private Hire Vehicle Operating Licence.

RESOLVED

to grant an exception to Section 7 of the Private Hire Vehicle and Hackney Carriage Policy and Conditions in respect of vehicles with an engine capacity of less than 1300cc in order to licence Nissan Leaf electric vehicles with the specification set out on pages 39 – 40 of the report. The operating centre for any such vehicle shall have at least one charging point present and maintained during the period of the relevant Private Hire Vehicle operating licence.

5 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

to exclude the Press and public from the meeting for the remaining business because otherwise, information which was exempt information by virtue of

Paragraphs 1, 3 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976 – PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE DRIVER LICENSING

The Committee considered an application for a Private Hire Vehicle Driver Licence, as detailed in the exempt appendix to the signed copy of these Minutes. After due consideration, it was

RESOLVED

to refuse the application for a Private Hire Vehicle Driver Licence.

7 EXEMPT MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2018 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The meeting closed at 12:20pm