

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the LICENSING AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE held in the Civic Suite (Lancaster/Stirling Rooms), Pathfinder House, St Marys Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 29 June 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor B S Banks – Chairman.

Councillors J Clarke, S J Criswell, S A Howell, A R Jennings, P A Jordan, P Kadewere, B M Pitt, D Terry and C H Tevlin.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M L Beuttell and A E Costello.

5 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 10th November 2021 and 18th May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

Prior to the start of the next item and for the benefit of those newly elected to the Council, the Interim Community Service Manager gave a brief overview of the specific services within the Community Division.

7 MONITORING REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF THE FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLANS

With the assistance of a report by the Interim Community Services Manager, the Committee received an update on progress made against the delivery of work on the Council's Food Law Enforcement and Health and Safety Plans during the period 1st October 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report also included cumulative data for the year – 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

By way of introduction, the Committee were reminded that the Service Plan for 2021-22 had been approved at a time during the pandemic when it was not known what restrictions would be in place for food businesses and officers undertaking inspections during the course of that year.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the lower than anticipated number of completed food hygiene inspections in 2021/22. In doing so, the Committee were reminded that this was a consequence of inspections only being permitted to resume from June 2021 and staff shortages within the team. Members were reminded that since the resumption of inspections, the focus of the team has been on those categorised as 'high risk' and recently opened businesses in line with the Food Standards Agency Recovery Plan. Members were also advised

that the absence of any Alternative Enforcement Strategy Inspections was not an immediate concern given their low-risk status which could be assessed by alternative means.

In reviewing the monitoring information, officers commended the team for their activities during the pandemic and acknowledged that it was unavoidable that the targets were not met within this period. However, moving forward into the 'new normal', it was incumbent on the Council to ensure that the routine food inspections returned as they were important to ensure that food businesses were operating at the standard required.

In response to a question regarding the anticipated timescale by which the status for programmed inspections was likely to return to target, the Committee were advised that the authority was working in line with the Food Standards Agency Recovery Plan and was scheduled to meet the first target imminently. It was anticipated that the status of the programme would be back to 'green' by June 2022. Comment was also made with regards to the general impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry over the course of the past two years.

The Committee were pleased to note that the food safety and hygiene enforcement function was now fully resourced as this had been a continuing challenge for the service over the previous two years.

Comment was also made with regards to the important role for the team in providing support and guidance to local businesses, community groups and agency partners and as such the Committee was pleased to note that the service would be investigating the viability and demand for, the reinstatement of classroom training courses in 2022-23.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that progress on the delivery of the two Service Plans for the period 1st October 2021 to 31st March 2022 be noted.

8 SERVICE PLAN FOR FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT 2022-23

Consideration was given to a report by the Interim Community Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a draft Service Plan for Food Law Enforcement for 2022-23.

The Committee were reminded that the District Council has responsibility for most food safety and hygiene enforcement functions within the District. As such, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires every local authority to outline how it will fulfil its duty to deliver food controls in the form of a Service Plan, specifying how and at what level the official controls will be delivered.

Having been reminded of the impact of Covid 19 on the service during the previous two years, the Committees' attention was drawn to the objectives which contribute to the overall aim of the proposed Plan for 2022-23. Members were pleased to note that a balanced programme of work was proposed which incorporated a full range of official controls, together with the recovery plan

implemented to address the backlog of food inspections created by Covid 19. Attention was also drawn to the planned developments for the service over the course of the coming year.

In reviewing the information provided, clarification was sought with regard to the fluctuations in the numbers of food businesses by type operating within Huntingdonshire in comparison to the previous year and the Environmental Health Team Leader undertook to circulate a further breakdown to Committee members outside of the meeting. Comments and questions were also raised and answered with regards to the hybrid working practices and the monitoring of officers' ability to work efficiently and agilely.

With regards to the proposed Development Plan for 2022/23, the Committee noted that it was hoped to investigate the viability and demand for the reinstatement of classroom-based training courses to help businesses comply with food hygiene requirements during the course of the year. It may also be possible to deliver these within local communities. Members noted that the delivery of such courses provided a possible income stream for the Council.

Comment was also made with regards to the ongoing issues with reporting and accuracy with data being migrated to the new Environmental Health and Licensing Management system and the Committee were advised that work was ongoing to embed the system more fully into everyday work and to get more from the system.

In response to a question regarding the impact of Brexit on food producers within the District, the Committee were advised that as yet there had been no increased demand for export certificates to the EU since Brexit. This was a result of the low number of manufacturers and the absence of any businesses which fall under the remit of the local authority for the export of meat / meat products. In addition, some of the controls due to be implemented have been postponed.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Service Plan for Food Law Enforcement 2022-23 be approved in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- (b) that the Interim Community Service Manager be authorised to update the 2021-22 performance data within the Service Plan prior to publication.
- (c) that quarterly reports be requested to monitor progress against the Service Plan.

9 SERVICE PLAN FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATION 2022-23

Consideration was given to a report by the Interim Community Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached the 2022-23 Draft Service Plan for Health and Safety Regulation.

The Committee were advised that Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the National Regulator for Health and Safety requires every local authority to outline how it will fulfil its duty to make adequate arrangements for the enforcement of the relevant statutory provisions within its area.

With regard to the content of the Draft Plan for 2022-23, Members' attention was drawn to the key priorities identified for the coming year as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report and specifically the local authority projects which had been identified. Following a number of recent incidents reported in the national press, Members were pleased to note the inclusion of a project relating to inflatable amusement devices.

In reviewing the proposed Plan and in response to questions from individual members, the Committee were advised that there was no longer a requirement to maintain a register of premises for which the Council has enforcement responsibility. However, the Council would continue to retain its historic records. Members were also pleased to note that the issues with reporting from the new Environmental Health and Licensing Management system were not the same for health and safety as for food hygiene.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the Service Plan for Health and Safety Regulation 2022-2023 be approved in accordance with the Council's Constitution;
- b) that the Interim Community Services Manager be authorised to update the 2021-22 performance data within the Service Plan prior to publication if required;
- c) that quarterly reporting figures on progress against the annual Service Plan for Health and Safety Regulation 2022-2023 be requested.

10 REPRESENTATIONS ON EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

With the assistance of a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee were invited to review the Council's representation on those organisations to which it appoints.

Members were advised that a full review of all of the organisations to which the Council appoints was undertaken in March / April 2022. As a result of which it had been proposed to discontinue the appointments to two of those organisations to which the Licensing and Protection Committee appoints. However subsequent to the publication of the report, it had been established that the liaison committee for the Little Barford Power Station was still in existence and it was now proposed to appoint the Chair, Councillor B S Banks as the Council's representative to this organisation.

Whereupon and having noted that local ward councillors had been proposed for the three appointments and were all content to fulfil these positions, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that nominations be made to the following organisations for the period 30th June to 7th May 2026 –

Organisation	Representative
Little Barford Power Station Liaison Committee	Councillor B S Banks
Needingworth Quarry Local Liaison Committee	Councillors P Hodgson-Jones and J Neish
Warboys Landfill Local Liaison Committee	Councillor C Lowe

- b) that in the event that new appointments are required to the District Council's representation during the course of the four-year term, the Elections and Democratic Services Manager be delegated after consultation with the Chair of the Licensing and Protection Committee to nominate and authorise alternative representatives as necessary.

11 HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE REVIEW

The Committee received a verbal update on a review of Hackney Carriage fares which had recently been the subject of a public consultation exercise.

Having noted that the public consultation had concluded on 27th June 2022, the Committee were advised that the adoption and approval of a table of fares for hackney carriages was considered to be an Executive function. Accordingly, a report on the outcome of the consultation would be considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 19th July 2022. Members were advised that as part of the report, a comparison would be included with the fares charged by other authorities.

12 SUSPENSION & REVOCATION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES

With the aid of a report by the Licensing Team (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee noted the details of actions which had been taken since the last meeting under delegated authority. There were currently no outstanding issues awaiting a decision from the Magistrates Court.

In reviewing the specific cases outlined within the report, Members sought clarification as to the process by which the Authority receives a notification should a licensed Private Hire vehicle be involved in an accident.

Chairman

