

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Licensing Committee held on Friday, 15 October 2021 at 4.30 pm in the Guildhall.

Present

Councillors Claire Udy (Chair)
Scott Payter-Harris (Vice-Chair)
Stuart Brown
George Madgwick
Lee Mason
Robert New
Darren Sanders
Benedict Swann
Daniel Wemyss

1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Ashmore, Kimberly Barrett, Tom Coles, Jason Fazackarley, Charlotte Gerada and Ian Holder. Councillor Barrett was represented by Councillor Sanders.

2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

The Committee held a minute's silence in memory of Sir David Amess MP, who had been killed that day, and sent their deepest condolences.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 December 2020 be approved.

4. Electric Vehicle Charging Points (AI 4)

Hayley Trower, Air Quality Improvement Manager, introduced the report and updated members on progress since the December 2020 meeting. The council has been successful in securing funding to install rapid electric vehicle charging points as part of measures to encourage taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers to use lower emission vehicles. The chargers take about an hour to fully charge a vehicle and can provide a quick top-up between fares. The chargers are large as they draw a lot of power and charge quickly. The funding of just under £500,000 allows for ten chargers. The contractor appointed to install the chargers, JoJu, has worked in other parts of Hampshire. JoJu has started feasibility work on locations suggested by drivers (shown on the map in Appendix A). The Air Quality Engagement Officer has spent considerable time, including carrying out a survey, with the taxi and PHV trade seeking their views on proposed locations. The aim is to have three or four chargers together in hubs as it is more cost effective and reduces frustration amongst drivers at not being able to charge vehicles. The Committee is invited to give their views.

Members' Questions

In response to questions officers clarified the following points:

The location of the hubs is constrained by the power supply for the National Grid. They will probably be located in council owned car parks as if they are on the highway they would need to be licensed and have traffic regulation orders. Officers aim to spread them across the city, for example, the Park and Ride, Southsea and north of Portsea Island.

The cost of running electric vehicles would be competitive with other charging points. Cost is based on per kilowatt hour (kWh) rather than pence per mile and is still being negotiated. Chargers at Wightlink are about 35 to 43 pence per kWh, at Morrisons about 42 pence and at the Port about 40 pence. The cost is higher with the rapid chargers as they charge vehicles more quickly. Members said it would be good if the cost per kWh was under 40 pence (approximately 12 pence per mile); it needs to be cost effective in the long term and provide a good deal for the taxi and PHV trade. The purchase price of electric vehicles needs to be taken into account as well as the amount of time spent on charging them; drivers need to be incentivised. Officers said they would take comments on cost on board and do what they could to support drivers. It is envisaged the chargers would be used more for quick top-ups than a full charge.

The taxi trade has expressed preferences for hubs in locations where they pick up work and stop for breaks which, with the most popular first, are the Hard, North End, Southsea Common near the piers, Fratton, Albert Road, Commercial Road, the Hilsea industrial parks.

The rapid charging points are intended initially for the taxi and PHV trade only and usage will be limited by smart cards. Drivers who are resident in Portsmouth but licensed elsewhere have asked about the chargers so usage may be extended. There are only about six electric vehicles licenced with Portsmouth; however, there are others working in the city who are not licensed here.

Officers are always looking for funding; the current award would be the first tranche. More locations could be suggested when there is more funding. They agreed the hubs need to be spread out with locations based on need and demand.

Officers can supply a breakdown of figures of the contractor's technical and economic feasibility studies and how they are incorporated into costs.

There are grants available for installation of charging points on private land, for example, a commercial energy or fuel supplier, and officers are happy to support them do this. Local authorities have been driving the infrastructure delivery so now private industry needs to contribute. Officers agreed to compile a list of private grants that are available and send it to registered operatives in the city.

Members thought it would be useful if large commercial developments could contribute as otherwise the council will be constantly looking for grants. Officers said Planning and Transport are updating their parking standards to include requirements for developers to contribute to initiatives such as electric vehicles and car clubs.

Officers are working on the issues of the removal of the Derby Road taxi rank and the use of bus lanes for private hire vehicles; however, as a licensing authority they are restricted in how quickly they can progress matters. Members felt these issues needed expediting and requested a Committee meeting before mid-December. The Licensing Manager agreed with holding a December meeting as she was working on new vehicle standards and statutory guidance which could be the subject of a report as well as the issues mentioned above. Members requested that the relevant Directors attend so they can answer questions on how the issues are progressing.

In discussion on the location of the hubs, members made the following points:

It would be helpful to get a steer from the taxi and PHV trade where they want the first hubs as it will help to agree priorities if there are only three or four of them.

There was strong support for one of the hubs to be "off island" north of the city. The hubs should not be "Southsea-centric." Wootton Street in Cosham was considered a very suitable location as it is near the railway station, shops, public toilets and a council car park; it is well used by drivers who take breaks there.

Near QA Hospital was recommended as it is a pick-up and drop-off point. Officers explained funding is only available for installation of chargers on public land so one could be put in QA's new car park if it is publicly accessible; they can check with QA.

Other suggestions for locations were (in priority order):

- Near other hospitals and railway stations
- Near major shopping centres such as Ashby Place car park in Southsea
- The Hard
- Albert Road but there may not be a car park near the latter
- Behind the Fleet pub as Guildhall Walk is very popular at the weekends.

Officers explained although the report is going to the Cabinet decisions on locations may be constrained by external factors, for example, the National Grid may say there is not enough capacity. Other sites may not get approval from the operators, even though they are on council land, as the Director may lose income or have other concerns. It is hoped to install at least one charging point before Christmas.

The Chair requested if members have any agenda items for the next meeting in December to email them to the Chair, the Vice-Chair or the Licensing Manager.

RESOLVED The Committee resolved to note the report.

The meeting concluded at 5.12 pm.

.....
Signed by the chair, Councillor Claire Udy