

**General Purposes Committee
Tuesday 23 February 2016
Item No 4.1**

MINUTES of MEETING of the MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held in the Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith on Tuesday 5 January 2016 at 2.00pm.

Present:- Councillors Coventry (Chair), Bennett, Bryant, Constable, Johnstone, Milligan, Montgomery, Muirhead, Parry, Rosie, Russell, Wallace and Young.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Baxter, Beattie, Imrie, Pottinger and de Vink.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of Meeting of 10 November 2015 were approved as a correct record, on the motion of Councillor Constable, seconded by Councillor Muirhead.

2. Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 –

(a) Procedure for (i) Disposal of Applications for and (ii) requests for the Suspension of Licences

There were submitted reports, dated 21 and 14 December 2015, by the Director, Resources, concerning the procedures for (i) disposing of applications for and (ii) requests for the suspension of licences, in terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

Decision

To note the reports.

(b) Taxis (and Private Hire Cars fitted with Taxi Meters) - Review of Fare Tariff

With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minutes of 10 November 2015, there was submitted report, dated 14 December 2015, by the Director, Resources, concerning the review the Taxi Fare Tariff.

In his report, the Director confirmed, *inter alia*, that:-

(i) Public Notice had appeared in the Midlothian Advertiser on 19 November 2015, giving until 19 December 2015 for the submission of representations on the proposals; all holders Taxi (and Private Hire Car Licences with Meters) had been advised of the outcome of the review; and Taxi Licence holders had been asked to confirm whether they favoured the changed proposals as regards the increase in the initial fare;

(ii) 25 Taxi licence holders had advised that they favoured the changed proposal ; six did not support it and favoured the *status quo*; and one had suggested that at Christmas and New Year, Tariff 3 should exclude 27 December and 3 January; (and 26 Licence holders had signed the “petition” in favour of the increase and six had not responded); and

(iii) in consultation with the Chair, the date for implementation had been fixed for 5 February 2016.

Appended to the report, were the reports by the Director, Resources which had been considered at the last meeting.

The Clerk reported, *inter alia*, that, since the report had been written, further responses had been received, one from a licence holder who did not support the proposal; and another two which were late; and letters in support of the *status quo*, could be tabled if needed.

Decision

(1) To note the report; and

(2) To affirm the decision to increase Tariff 1 by sixty pence; and Tariff 2 by fifty pence, respectively, for a distance not exceeding 339m or for the initial period of waiting time of sixty seconds or for a combination of time and distance, with effect from 5 February 2016, as shown in **Appendix I** hereto.

3. Houses In Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – Overprovision Policy

With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minutes of 1 October 2013, there was submitted report, dated 5 December 2015, by the Director, Resources, concerning an examination of the factors relating to overprovision policy in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) by a Joint Working Group.

In his report, the Director confirmed, *inter alia*,:-

- (a) that the Joint Working Group had met on three occasions, namely, 10 December 2013, 31 March 2015 and 15 December 2015;
- (b) Current Statutory Policy Guidance and its application elsewhere and in Midlothian;
- (c) that there was no simple numerical formula for pinpointing the threshold between provision and overprovision;
- (d) the need for sustainability; and
- (e) the options available, including considering applications on their merits; and
- (f) that the Working Group had agreed to recommend that the number of HMOs in any single locality be restricted to 8% of the total number of domestic properties.

Appended to the Report were:-

- (i) A Note of the Meeting of the Joint Working Group held on 15 December 2015;
- (ii) Potential Indicators and measures; and
- (iii) Statistical information relating to proportions of HMOs by Household and also HMO Occupants by Datazone Population.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Housing and Customer Services explained the thrust of the recommendation; and the Housing Planning and Performance Manager clarified matters relating to the statistical information.

Decision

Rather than adopt the recommendation of the Joint Working Group and reflect the content of the Midlothian Local Plan, subject to the exclusion of student accommodation at Newbattle Abbey College and the Dalkeith Palace Wisconsin University Campus, to restrict the number of HMOs, such that the number of bed spaces available in HMOs can be no higher than 8% of the total number of residents in any single locality.

4. Links in Europe – Kreis Heinsberg, Germany and Komarom – Esztergom, Hungary

With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minutes of 10 November 2015, there was submitted report, dated 21 December 2015, by the Director, Resources, appraising Members of matters arising from the discussions with the representatives of Heinsberg and Komarom - Esztergom which took place on 14 October 2015, during the Festival of Friendship in Midlothian.

In his report, the Director confirmed that various developments were progressing as described in **Appendix II** hereto.

Decision

To note the report.

5. Exclusion of Members of the Public

In view of the nature of the business to be transacted, the Committee agreed that the public be excluded from the Meeting during discussion of the undernoted item, as contained in the Addendum hereto, as there might be disclosed exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, 12 and 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Decision

- (a) Private Hire Car Licence –Application – Granted;
- (b) Taxi Driver's Licence – Request for Suspension – Agreed that the licence remain extant; and

(c) Private Hire Car Drivers' Licences –Applications (2) – Granted.

The Meeting terminated at 4.02pm.