

Tuesday 3rd November – Public Protection Committee

Local Air Quality Management

Officers updated the committee regarding air quality in the Borough and highlighted certain areas with greater pollution levels. In accordance with its statutory duties, the Borough Council has recently undertaken an update Assessment of Air Quality in the Borough.

Five locations in the Borough are still highlighted as areas with high levels of pollution and will continue to be monitored. These include:

- Kidsgrove Liverpool Road
- Newcastle Town Centre – A34 Holy Trinity, 1 to 34 London Road, 106 King Street and 52/54 London Road Newcastle.

Air quality action plans continue to be in place for these specific areas. Newcastle Borough Council will continue to work with partners, including Staffordshire County Councils highways department to find solutions. Existing budgets will be utilised to fund work identified in this report.

Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Fees 2016/2017

The Public Protection committee considered the proposed fees and agreed for the fees to be sent out to consultation. These fees are purely to cover administration costs and by no means make a profit for the Council. These fees usually rise with inflation.

Amendment to Licensing Conditions of Dog Boarding Establishments

The Committee were asked to add a clause to the present licensing conditions of dog boarding establishments. New legislation which comes into force on 6th April 2016 requires all dog owners to have their pet implanted with a chip and up to date details maintained on a register. The owners will face prosecution if they don't comply.

The Committee have agreed the following measures:

1. Proprietors should establish whether a boarded dog has a microchip. Where no chip is present they should remind owners of their obligations.
2. Where practical, proprietors should assist owners to have an unchipped dog microchipped and registered whilst it is boarded with them.
3. Where a dog is returned unchipped to an owner, the proprietor should inform the Borough Council, providing details of the owner's name, address and description of their dog.

Hackney Carriage Tariffs

The Chairman of the Newcastle and Kidsgrove Hackney Carriage Association asked the committee to consider a change to the commencement time of tariff 2. This would mean that tariff 2 would come into effect at 10pm where as currently it is 12am. Tariff 2 is 50% more than Tariff 1. Without any supporting evidence or reason for this change, the committee rejected the proposal in its entirety. The committee had strong views and believed that an increase to tariff 2 at 10pm would in fact harm town centre night life and hit hardworking families in the Borough.

CSE and Safeguarding Awareness

Officers reported that taxi drivers have responded positively to the compulsory awareness training for safeguarding and CSE introduced by this committee. Some authorities have not even looked into this issue, let alone introduce compulsory training. The committee reaffirmed that it believed the Council should be tough on this issue and ensure all our residents, young and old, are protected by these types of measures.

Scheme of Delegation

The Committee was asked to consider a scheme of delegation, so that in an emergency, officers can take immediate action to refuse or revoke a private hire drivers' licence. On some occasions, immediate action is necessary to keep the public safe. As chair, I did raise some concerns about officers having this sort of power as it could be open to misuse. Therefore, the committee agreed that if an urgent decision was needed, the chair or vice-chair of the Public Protection Committee would need to be contacted to sign off any refusal or revocation of a license. A report would then follow and be presented to the committee for further consideration.