

LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 15 April, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

In a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor Sears (Chairman)
Councillor Aftab
Councillor Barton
Councillor Bird
Councillor Carpenter
Councillor Clarke
Councillor P. Hughes
Councillor Rochelle
Councillor Sarohi
Councillor Smith

In attendance

Mr. Khan – Taxi Owners Association

1201/09 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Anson, Beeley and Tweddle.

It was noted that Councillor Carpenter was attending as a substitute for Councillor Beeley.

1202/09 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings held on 21 January and 4 March, 2009 copies having been circulated to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

1203/09 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Barton declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in item 6 on the agenda relating to the Taxi Rank in Lower Bridge Street, Walsall.

1204/09 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)**

Resolved

There were no items on the agenda which the Committee considered, should be dealt with in private session.

At this juncture, as a mark of respect to those who lost their lives in the Hillsborough disaster, the Committee observed a minutes silence.

1205/09 **Sports Grounds Safety Certificates and Walsall Football Club (Limited) Stadium Safety Advisory Group**

The report of the Head of Public Protection was submitted:-

(see annexed)

In answer to questions, the Council's Legal Advisor, Mr. Patouchas, advised that the Committee did not have the power to refuse to issue a certificate. The Committee had the power to issue a prohibition notice which would be effective immediately and that the prohibition notice was required, by law, to specify what matters required rectification.

Resolved

- (1) That the current constitutional position that the Licensing and Safety Committee has power to issue, amend or replace Sports Ground Safety Certificates, be confirmed; and that it be noted that duly authorised officers will continue to carry out inspections and undertake enforcement as required;
- (2) That approval be given to the Constitution and Terms of Reference for the Walsall Football Club (Ltd) Stadium Safety Advisory Group as set out in Appendix A to the report as a technical group with no decision making powers, and which would provide a consultation forum to bring the relevant areas of specialist input associated with spectator safety;
- (3) That approval be given to the membership of the Walsall Football Club (Ltd) Stadium Safety Advisory Group as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- (4) That the Committee undertakes to exercise its decision making powers on such matters as are raised by the Walsall Football Club (Ltd) Stadium Safety Advisory Group;
- (5) That the Committee receive minutes of the Walsall Football Club (Ltd) Stadium Safety Advisory Group meetings in order that it is informed of the more routine business considered by the Group where decisions are not required.

1206/09 **Taxi Rank in Lower Bridge Street, Walsall**

The report of the Head of Engineering and Transportation was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Mr. Glyn Oliver, Service Manager, Traffic and Transportation and Mr. Khan, Taxi Owners Association, were in attendance for this item. Mr. Oliver indicated that, since the decision of the Committee in October 2008 giving approval to swapping the taxi rank with the blue badge parking bays in Lower Bridge Street, Walsall so that the taxi rank is located on the east side of Lower Bridge Street and the blue badge parking bays on the west side of Lower Bridge Street, further information had been provided by the Disability Forum and a survey on taxi usage by both able bodied and disabled customers in Lower Bridge Street had been undertaken by the Forum. Mr. Andrew Moulton from the Forum had been invited to attend the meeting to present the additional information. Mr. Oliver advised Members that Mr. Moulton was not in attendance but that he had a copy of the information and the survey and would present it to the Committee on Mr. Moulton's behalf.

In doing so Mr. Oliver advised the Committee that a survey had been carried out over three market days, 2nd, 5th and 6th December, 2008 between 9.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Each time slot was a period of 1 hour resulting in 5 slots. The survey covered the taxi fare customers requiring a journey from the town centre from the locations of Bridge Street (taxi rank) and the corner adjacent to Tesco, and included passengers from the following categories:-

- Wheelchair users
- Stick users
- Walking frame users
- Able bodied people.

Mr. Oliver presented the following information:-

From the taxi rank in Bridge Street

Tuesday, 2nd December, 2008

Wheelchair users	- 0
Stick users	- 0
Walking frame users	- 0
Able bodied people	- 0

Friday, 5th December, 2008

Wheelchair users	- 0
Stick users	- 0
Walking frame users	- 0
Able bodied people	- 10

Saturday, 6th December, 2008

Wheelchair users	- 0
Stick users	- 0
Walking frame users	- 0
Able bodied people	- 19

From the corner adjacent to Tesco, Walsall Town Centre

Tuesday, 2nd December, 2008

Wheelchair users	- 2
Stick users	- 7
Walking frame users	- 2
Able bodied people	- 49

Friday, 5th December, 2008

Wheelchair users	- 8
Stick users	- 3
Walking frame users	- 1
Able bodied people	- 37

Saturday, 6th December, 2008

Wheelchair users	- 3
Stick users	- 4
Walking frame users	- 0
Able bodied people	- 42

Mr. Oliver went on to say that the survey had been commissioned by the Walsall Disability Forum who were asking the Committee to review its previous decision and consider a 50/50 split or a percentage split between taxi/disabled spaces on the basis that the survey had shown that there was very little pick up from the current taxi rank.

There followed a period of debate during which the point was made that there was a deficit of spaces for blue badge holders. Mr. Oliver indicated that officers had not been able to find suitable sites for blue badge holders. The right hand side of Freer Street was suggested by Members. Mr. Oliver advised Members that his officers had checked this site and had concerns but would look at the situation again.

The question of powers of the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) in preventing drivers from driving through Lower Bridge Street and St. Paul's Street was raised. Mr. Oliver explained that CEOs only had powers to issue tickets for illegal parking. The issue of moving vehicles was still the responsibility of the Police. He undertook to bring a report to a future meeting on the powers of CEOs.

After further discussion it was Moved and duly Seconded:-

That, notwithstanding the new information and the survey provided by the Walsall Disability Forum, the Committees resolution from a meeting held on 22nd October, 2008 giving approval to swapping the taxi rank with the blue badge parking bays in Lower Bridge Street, Walsall so that the taxi rank is located on the east side of Lower Bridge Street and the blue badge parking bays on the west side of Lower Bridge Street be reaffirmed; and that officers be requested to look at providing the blue badge spaces lost as a result of that decision, in Freer Street.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried, 7 voting in favour and 1 against.

Resolved

That, notwithstanding the new information and the survey provided by the Walsall Disability Forum, the Committees resolution from a meeting held on 22nd October, 2008 giving approval to swapping the taxi rank with the blue badge parking bays in Lower Bridge Street, Walsall so that the taxi rank is located on the east side of Lower Bridge Street and the blue badge parking bays on the west side of Lower Bridge Street be reaffirmed; and that officers be requested to look at providing the blue badge spaces lost as a result of that decision, in Freer Street.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.58 p.m.

Chairman

Date