

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Environment and Community Panel held on
Wednesday, 8th January, 2025 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town
Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

PRESENT: S Collop (Chair)

Councillors T Barclay, P Bland, A Bullen, R Colwell, P Devulapalli (Vice-Chair),
D Heneghan, A Kemp, V Spikings (Substitute for Councillor Sandell) and J Kirk

Portfolio Holders

Councillor M de Whalley

Councillor J Moriarty

Councillor J Rust

Officers:

Martin Chisholm – Assistant Director, Operations and Commercial

Andy King- Senior Housing Manager

Nikki Patton- Housing Services Manager

Criag Pease- Senior Licensing Officer

Under Standing Order 34:

Councillor Beales

Councillor Kemp (on Zoom)

EC57: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sandell, Hodson
and Kunes.

EC58: MINUTES

RESOLVED: The Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a
correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC59: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EC60: URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

EC61: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor Beales and Kemp (on Zoom) were present under Standing Order 34.

EC62: **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was none.

EC63: **CABINET REPORT- HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES CONTRACT**

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The Senior Housing Manager presented the report and outlined the reason and need for procuring two services for a minimum of three-year period to help with the delivery of the council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy: Ending Homelessness, Person by Person.

He explained to the panel the services were an Intensive Support Service and an Early Intervention Service. He brought to the attention of the Panel there were seven bids for the invitation to tender. He confirmed a contractor had been selected and the pre contract process had begun.

The Senior Housing Manager highlighted there were no direct financial implication for the Council as there were existing reserves from previous central government grants which were ringfenced by Central Government for the prevention and relief of homelessness.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and invited questions and comments from the panel.

Councillor Heneghan asked if this service was cheaper to deliver in house.

The Senior Housing Manager commented he could not advise if the services were cheaper to deliver in house but believed the services would be more effective when delivered in partnership. He added the Council had strong partnerships with specialised services within West Norfolk. He added further if there was a cost saving with the services being inhouse this would be outweighed by the existing partnerships.

Councillor Heneghan sought clarification on funding and asked if we were waiting to find out about additional funding.

The Senior Housing Manager clarified; the funding available was from reserves which had previously been granted by Central Government which were ringfenced for the prevention and relief of homelessness.

He added there was funding for 2025/26 through MHCLG's rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant.

Councillor Heneghan sought clarification on the impact of devolution on the three-year contracts being proposed.

The Senior Housing Manager advised the Council would not be the first Local Authority to enter a contract such as this and go through devolution. He provided an example of Somerset Council went through this process.

The Housing Services Manager confirmed the included in the contract was standard clauses such as funding, changes in legislation and statutory requirements. She added devolution would be covered in these clauses in the contract and for now the services needed to continue.

Councillor Rust, Portfolio Holder for People and Communities advised of the importance of these services and the families which are homeless needed to be supported. She added the external partnership are different to the relationships clients have with the Council and encouragement engagement with all parties. She added further with devolution, the services need to be delivered and the three-year contract provides reassurance to the external partnerships.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

1. to agree that £756,600 of funding, ringfenced for homelessness services, should be spent on the procurement of an Intensive Support Service and an Early Intervention Service.
2. to agree that the spending on this service should be derived from ringfenced government grants in the first instance and ringfenced reserves to make up any shortfall.

EC64: **CABINET REPORT- REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING FEE LEVELS**

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The Senior Licensing Officer presented the report to the Panel.

He brought to the Panel's attention legislation requires fees to be agreed by Full Council in accordance with the Local Authority Functions and Responsibilities Regulations 2000. He added the new figures and charges had been established with consideration of fees of neighbouring authorities, case law, CIPFA regulations and assessing the time spend on each aspect of the specific licensing functions. The Senior Licensing Officer explained the current fees and charges were last revised and approved on the 26th November 2015 and came into effect from 1st December 2015. He advised failure to set fees to a level

that ensures full cost recovery could result in a deficit of funds for services provided. The Senior Licensing Officer outlined to the Panel a consultation was held between 25th September 2024 to 18th December 2024 where Members of the licensed trade were invited to attend meetings with Officers and Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder.

The Chair thanked the Senior Licensing Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the panel.

Councillor Colwell commented the response from the consultation acknowledged and accepted the need for the fees and charges to be increased and renewed. He sought clarification in the difference of fee between Private Hire and Hackney Carriage.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed process of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage were different as Hackney Carriages are provided more services as part of the licence therefore there were higher costs. He added the initial process was the same however the ongoing costs are different due to the additional services.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Devulapalli commented the Council should not have to subsidise the costs of licences. She asked how our fees compare to neighbouring areas. She sought further clarification on the difference in fees between licensing one vehicle opposed to multiple vehicles.

The Senior Licensing Officer responded to Councillor Devulapalli and advised our fees were average compared to neighbouring authorities. He explained to the Panel the fee for Private Hire Operator with multiple vehicles was higher as there are more checks and further administration and it was based on the number of records which had to be checked.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Kemp on Zoom sought clarification on the affect and impact on disability vehicles and asked if there was a reduction or exemption on the fees.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed there was not a reduction or exemption but an additional cost of £32.00 to test a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle at the first licence but this was not chargeable at the renewal of the licence.

The Assistant Director for Operations and Commercial clarified further the fee of £32.00 was a single cost and was unlikely to cause an impact but it would encourage further Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.

Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing commented further, there was additional checks which was therefore safer and more appropriate for clients.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Devulapalli asked if there was an option to pay the fees in instalments.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed this was not offered and had not been done previously. He explained this could increase fees further due to the further administration of chasing payments. He added conditions would need to be put in place for non-payments and the ability for Officer to revoke or suspend licences.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

- 1.The Council approves the new fee structure for drivers of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.
- 2.The Council approves the new fee structure for private hire operators.
- 3.The Council approves the new fee structure for vehicles and other sundry matters attached in the fee structure.

EC65: **CABINET REPORT- REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING PROCEDURES AND CONDITIONS**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.](#)

The Senior Licensing Officer presented the report to the Panel and explained the current Hackney Carriage Licensing Procedures and Conditions were approved by Council on 25th April 2022. He highlighted to the Panel the Department for Transport had published Statutory Standards in July 2020 and new Best Practice Guidance in November 2023 which were now incorporated in the revised procedures and conditions. The Senior Licensing Officer outlined to the Panel a consultation was held between 25th September 2024 to 18th December 2024 where Members of the license trader were invited to attend meetings with Officers and Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder.

The Chair thanked the Senior Licensing Officer for the report and invited questions and comments from the panel.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Kemp on Zoom asked if disability training was being offered and mandatory. She sought clarification in cross border regulations and commented drivers are going to surrounding areas such as Wisbech to obtain their licence.

The Senior Licensing Officer clarified there had not been a problem with cross border vehicles and confirmed several of the current drivers had completed a disability awareness course with Norfolk County Council. He confirmed there was proposed changes in the procedures and conditions that all new drivers were to undertake a disability awareness course and pass the assessment before becoming licenced.

Councillor Colwell referred to 2.15 and 2.16 of the report and sought clarification on the knowledge test and commented they were only allowed three occasions to try and pass the assessment. He sought further clarification on the uptake on learning British Sign Language as mentioned in the report.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed the reason with bringing the three attempts on the Knowledge Test was to ensure drivers were learning and understanding the conditions rather than just taking the test several times in the hope of passing the assessment. He added in regard to British Sign Language this was a recommendation in the Department of Transport guidance however this was not being adopted by the Council.

Councillor Moriarty, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing commented he was impressed with the working relationship between Members of the Trade and Officers.

RESOLVED: The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

That Council approves the new hackney carriage and private hire procedures and conditions document.

EC66: **BIODIVERSITY COMPETITION PRESENTATION**

[Click here to view the recording of this item on YouTube.](#)

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Devulapalli gave a presentation to the panel on the Biodiversity Competition. She explained the purpose of the competition to promote the value and increase awareness of Biodiversity. She brought to the Panels attention the number of species which were rapidly declining and becoming endangered. She highlighted the difference in this competition to existing projects within the Borough as it targets individual households.

Councillor Devulapalli commented the competition was being advertised from March 2025 in the bin calendars, local community places such as Town Halls, Churches, and Libraries along with it being published on the website. She outlined the criteria to the Panel and advised the competition will be open from May to July 2025 with the closing date of 1st August 2025. She encouraged participation including prizes from local businesses.

The Chair thanked Councillor Devulapalli and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Spikings commented Norfolk County Council sell owl and bat boxes as well as a Parish Councillor in Upwell makes bird/bat

boxes. She suggested money from Councillor Community Grants to be used as prizes for the competition instead of relying on businesses in the private sector.

Councillor Bullen commented he wholeheartedly supported this initiative and even a window box could make a difference. He brought to the Panels attention a Wildlife event called Wild Downham Market being held on Saturday 1st February at Downham Market Town Hall from 10am to 2pm which allowed everyone to be involved.

Councillor Heneghan commented it was a great initiative and asked if there was a category for community groups.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Devulapalli confirmed this had been considered and would be incorporated in the future once the competition was established further.

Councillor Colwell offered the bird boxes left over from the Men's Shed project to help as advertisement and encourage individuals to participate.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Beales supported the initiative and commented Councillor Spikings suggestion of using the underspend of the Councillor Community Grants was supported and if the Panel made a formal request this would help launch the competition.

The Chair, Councillor Collop suggested a potential way of advertisement which we could consider to promote Biodiversity.

Councillor De Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity commented the competition came from the work carried out by the Biodiversity Task Group. He thanked Councillor Bullen, Devulapalli, volunteers at Nature Network and the Senior Ecologist for all their work surrounding the Biodiversity Competition. He added this competition supported our corporate strategy.

Councillor Spikings proposed the underspend of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme was to be used to fund prizes for the Biodiversity Competition.

Councillor Devulapalli seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED: The underspend from the Councillor Community Grants Scheme from 2024/25 be used to fund prizes for the Biodiversity Competition.

EC67: WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DECISION LIST

Members of the Panel were reminded that an eform was available on the Intranet which could be completed and submitted if Members had items which they would like to be considered for addition to the Work Programme.

Councillor Colwell sought clarification on plans relating to the Parkway development which included land to be used as Wildlife site. He asked for an update and if this would still be going ahead.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Beales confirmed he would provide an update in his report to Council.

RESOLVED: The Panel's Work Programme was noted.

EC68: DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Environment and Community Panel would be held on **25th February 2025 at 4:30pm** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall.**

The meeting closed at 5.26 pm