

# **COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

## **Request for Verbatim Minutes of Meetings of the Taxi Forum and the Taxi Liaison Group 27 June 2013**

### **Report of the Chief Executive**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To enable the Committee to consider a request for verbatim minutes of Taxi Forum and Taxi Liaison Group meetings.

**This report is public**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(1) The views of the Committee are sought.**

##### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Taxi Forum is a six monthly meeting between members of the Licensing Regulatory Committee and hackney carriage and private hire proprietors. The purpose of the meeting is to provide a forum for consultation with the taxi trade on various issues affecting vehicles and drivers, and to enable proprietors to raise any relevant concerns with Members. The Forum is not a decision-making body; any issues raised that require a decision are referred to the Licensing Regulatory Committee.
- 1.2 The Taxi Liaison Group also meets six monthly, between the Forum meetings, and is attended by Licensing Officers, the Police, the Highways Authority and a small number of hackney carriage and private hire proprietors, including representatives of the taxi section of the local branch of UNITE. The Group discusses matters of mutual interest to the various organisations; again no decisions are taken.
- 1.3 An officer from Democratic Services attends both the Forum and the Liaison Group meetings and takes notes. Notes/minutes are then published on the Council's website.
- 1.4 On a number of occasions, some proprietors have questioned at the Forum meeting why verbatim notes are not taken, and, at the last meeting in April 2013, a proprietor again asked why verbatim minutes were not taken at the Taxi Liaison Group and Forum meetings.
- 1.5 The Chief Executive explained, as he had done at a previous meeting, that

the City Council did not take verbatim minutes. Minutes of meetings were a brief summary of proceedings and decisions. As a matter of policy, notes were taken of informal meetings and actions recorded. Members of the trade could take their own notes if they wanted to.

- 1.6 However, proprietors asked for verbatim minutes to be considered for the future, and this report is therefore brought to the Committee for its consideration, on the basis that it is timely to consider it at the same time as considering the possible future recording or webcasting of Council meetings.

## **2.0 Proposal Details**

- 2.1 It is the Council's policy not to take verbatim notes or minutes of any meetings. Formal minutes are of course produced in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 for meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees, but these are not a full record of the meeting, but rather set out the decisions taken. The Council does not employ staff who are able or qualified to take verbatim minutes, as the staff employed in Democratic Services are employed for a much wider range of skills and experience relating to committee administration. The notes taken at all meetings, whether formal or informal, are handwritten, and rely on officers' ability to keep up with and note the discussions taking place.
- 2.2 The only way of providing verbatim notes or minutes would be through a transcript of a recording of the meeting. This would be onerous in terms of staff resources, and would require the employment of an audio-typist.
- 2.3 Elsewhere on this agenda is a referral report from Council concerning the recording and web-casting of Council meetings, and it would therefore seem appropriate for the Committee to consider at the same time the note-taking and minuting arrangements of both formal and informal meetings, and the demands that may be made should any recording equipment be procured.
- 2.4 The view of officers is, however, that for informal meetings such as the Taxi Liaison Group and the Taxi Forum, especially where members of the public are speaking, it is not appropriate for recordings to be made, and that it is satisfactory for the current practice with regard to the production of notes/minutes to continue. No decisions are taken at these meetings, and it is open to any attendee to make their own notes at the meeting, although recording devices are not allowed to be used.
- 2.5 The Committee's views are sought.

## **3.0 Details of Consultation**

- 3.1 The report is brought to the Committee following a request from the taxi trade.

## **4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)**

- 4.1 This report should be considered in conjunction with the report on recording and web-casting of Council meetings, and enables Members to take into account the demands that may arise for the recording of other meetings, should the Council purchase recording equipment for Council meetings.

## 5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The views of the Committee are sought.

### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

None arising directly from this report.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Whilst anything said in formal meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees has qualified privilege for the purposes of defamation proceedings that would not apply to informal meetings.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications are directly linked to those in the report on recording and web-casting Council meetings, together with potential staffing implications which would need to be costed if members decided to approve the request.

### **OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

**Human Resources:**

None

**Information Services:**

None

**Property:**

None

**Open Spaces:**

None

### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and her comments are on a related report on this agenda: Recording of Council meetings.

### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has prepared this report in her capacity as Head of Governance.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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