

LICENSING COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2017 AT THE WEST WILTSHIRE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Pip Ridout (Chairman), Cllr Desna Allen (Vice Chairman), Cllr Nick Blakemore, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Dennis Drewett, Cllr Sue Evans, Cllr Mike Hewitt, Cllr Simon Jacobs and Cllr George Jeans

Also Present:

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Davis and Green and from Tracy Daszkiewicz (Consultant in Public Health).

2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2016 were presented to the Committee.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2016 be approved and signed as a correct record.

3 **Chairman's Announcements**

As this was the last meeting of this Council term, the Chairman wished to express her thanks to all Committee members, the Licensing Team and all other staff involved with licensing.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **Public Participation**

No questions had been submitted from the public prior to the meeting. There were two members of the public present and the Committee heard from Mr Adrian Berridge who wished to make a statement in respect of Agenda item 7 – Proposed Changes to Licensing Fees.

Mr Berridge stated that it was already struggle to recruit new drivers in Wiltshire as there are other costs involved including a medical and these costs could be in the region of £400/£450 as a start up cost. 50% of his drivers were due for retirement and if they all leave then he would struggle to cover the current demand for taxi journeys. He didn't feel that there should be an increase in the licensing fees, bearing in mind that admin costs should have come down now that there is not an annual renewal needed.

The Chairman thanked Mr Berridge for his comments.

6 **Minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committees**

Eastern Area

- 12/10/16 Application for a Premises Licence
Potterne Social Club, Ewarts Croft, Potterne, Devizes
- 31/10/16 Application for a Variation of a Premises Licence
Crown & Anchor, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Marlborough

Northern Area

- 21/09/16 Application for a Variation of a Premises Licence
SN15 Leisure Ltd, Station Hill, Chippenham
- 12/10/16 Application for a Premises Licence
Centre News, High Street, Calne
- 28/11/16 Application for a Variation of a Premises Licence
Calne Town Council, Bank House, The Strand, Calne

Southern Area

- 17/01/17 Application for a Personal Licence

Western Area

- 04/10/16 Application for a Variation to a Premises Licence
Center Parcs, Longleat Forest, Warminster

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings detailed above be approved and signed as correct records.

7 **Proposed Changes to Licensing Fees**

Ian Brown (Head of Environment Services) referred to the proposal to increase licensing fees for hackney carriage and private hire drivers and private hire operators within the administrative area covered by Wiltshire Council that was circulated with the Agenda. He highlighted the following:

- The current charges as proposed are set at a level which enables the Council to recover its reasonable costs of administering the service and would continue to be reviewed annually to ensure that this is still the case;
- The proposed 5% increase in charges would see a rise of £3.67 per year for a 3 year Hackney/Private Hire driver licence and £4.40 per year for a 5 year licence;
- Payment plans were available for anyone claiming hardship;
- The Immigration Act came into effect in December 2016 and on occasion the Council are required to issue a driver with a licence for a short period of time to correspond with the period covered by their visa. A monthly fee had been calculated to enable a licence to be granted with would terminate at the same time as the period covered by the visa expires;
- The proposed fees would be published for public consultation for a period of 28 days and if no significant objections were received then they would then come into effect;

Members raised the following:

- I understand the Council have a duty to recover costs, but if we approve the increase in fees and the trade realise the concerns raised would this cause an issue with our public transport infrastructure in that taxi services will not be able to be provided due to lack of drivers. What could we do to head off this problem?
- What had been the take up of the payment plans?

Out of 1085 drivers, 270 have used the payment plan option. Out of 103 operators, 25 have used the payment plan option. Those who have chosen to pay over 5 years won't see their fees increase until the time that they have to renew.

Cllr Peter Hutton (Portfolio Holder) thanked Mr Berridge for attending the meeting and confirmed that the Taxi Licensing Team liaised well with the trade

and that there was constant Officer/Trade dialogue which has greatly improved over the years. Over 1000 of drivers had completed the Safeguarding training. The Council would continue to review the fees each year as per the Trade's request and acknowledge the role that they play in providing community transport. The tariff increase had been well received as that had meant a wage increase for the drivers. If the changes to fees were to be approved today, then the details would go out to consultation and the trade would be able to make representations.

Members asked if there was anything else that could be done to attract new drivers to join the trade. It was acknowledged that Wiltshire has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and that could be a factor in not attracting new recruits.

Officers confirmed that there would be a review of Taxi tariffs in approximately 18 months and that the Council are looking at Uber and how to protect their existing trade and drivers.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Licensing Committee agreed the proposed revision of fees for hackney carriage and private hire driver and operator licences as set out page 75 of the Agenda.**
- 2. Officers be authorised to carry out the necessary public consultation in relation to the proposed fee changes and to implement the revised fees in the event that no significant objections arise from that consultation.**

8 Update from the Licensing Service

The Committee were referred to the Update on the Licensing Service which had been prepared by Linda Holland, Licensing Manager. Linda highlighted the following:

- The Immigration Bill 2016 will mean that Immigration Enforcement will become a responsibly authority. All personal and premises licence holders must have permission to live and work in the UK. Immigration offences will be relevant offences under the Licensing Act 2003 and Immigration Officers will have the power of entry to investigate immigration offences in licenced premises;
- The Police Crime Bill 2016 will amend the meaning of 'alcohol' to also include powdered or vaporised alcohol. Licensing Authorities will now have the authority to consider revoking a personal licence when notified of a conviction for a relevant offence with the list of relevant offences being expanded. The Government is proposing to amend the Late Night Levy and to place Cumulative Impact Policies on a statutory footing; and

- The Licensing Team wished to thank all Members for serving on the Licensing Committee and Sub Committee Hearings.

The Vice Chair wished to thank all Officers that supported licensing on behalf of the Committee.

Resolved:

That the Committee note the Licensing Update.

9 **Dates of Future Committee Meetings**

Members noted the dates of future meetings of the Licensing Committee as detailed below, all to start at 10.30am:

12 June 2017
11 September 2017
11 December 2017
12 March 2018.

It was planned to hold a general overview licensing training session for all Councillors after May 2017 and then specific Licensing Committee training for Committee members which would be led by Linda Holland.

10 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.05 am)

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