

Monday, 9 January 2017
at 6.00 pm

General Licensing Committee

Members: Councillor Dow (Chairman) and Councillors Belsey, Coles, Freebody, Holt, Murdoch, Murray, Robinson and Swansborough

7 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2015.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2015 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

8 Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillor Rodohan and Smart.

9 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) by members as required under Section 31 of the Localism Act and of other interests as required by the Code of Conduct.

None were declared.

10 Urgent items of business.

A request to add an urgent item of business to the agenda relating to the reintroduction of a taxi forum was proposed by Councillor Belsey and seconded by Councillor Freebody.

The proposal was approved unanimously by the Committee and added as an item to the agenda.

11 Adoption of Standard Licence Conditions for Riding Establishments.

The Committee considered the report of the Senior Specialist Advisor regarding the adoption of standard licence conditions for Riding Establishments.

The Council has the power to adopt its own set of standard conditions to be attached to any licences issued to proprietors of Riding Establishments and to inspect these establishments at all reasonable times in order to ensure that their premises are and remained suitable. Any licences are issued for a maximum period of one year. The proposed set of conditions were attached at appendix 1 to the report.

The Council had received its first Riding Establishment licence for a number of years in September 2016. The licence was granted following inspection

and issued with statutory conditions required by the Riding Establishment Act 1964 and those recommended by the veterinary surgeon.

The Committee agreed that a standard set of conditions would ensure a consistent approach to the licensing of such premises; improve public safety and welfare of the animals.

RESOLVED: (Unanimous) That the standard set of licence conditions be adopted.

12 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Penalty Points Scheme.

The Committee considered the report of the Senior Specialist Advisor regarding consideration of introducing a Penalty Points Scheme.

It was proposed to implement a penalty points scheme to improve the levels of compliance within the trade and subsequently improve the standards, safety and protection of the travelling public. The proposed penalty points scheme was attached at appendix 1 to the report. It was designed to record misdemeanours and act as a record of a driver's behaviour and conduct so as to ascertain whether they remain fit and proper to hold the relevant licence.

If approved the scheme would be subject to a three month consultation period and would be open to the trade and members of the public. It was suggested that the scheme be directed to the Disability Involvement Group as part of the consultation.

Peter Smith, Taxi Driver addressed the Committee in general support of the scheme however suggested some amendments. He stated that a breach of item 18 and invalidating your insurance should result in 12 points being awarded, matching item 9. He also requested that items 6, 22, 23, 24, 31, 41 be amended to award points to the driver in addition to the vehicle owner or operator. It was proposed by Councillor Murray and seconded by Councillor Swansborough to endorse the scheme subject to the amendments suggested by Mr Smith. This was approved unanimously by the Committee.

The Committee discussed several points in the scheme that could be perceived as subjective. The Senior Specialist Advisor clarified that there was an appeal process to any points awarded.

The Committee also requested that a report be brought back to a future meeting following the consultation process.

RESOLVED: (Unanimous)(1) That the Committee endorse the scheme, outlined in the report, subject to the amendments requested by Mr Smith.

(2) That the consultation process be approved and report brought back to Committee following its conclusion to make a final determination on the scheme's implementation.

13 Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Fee and Charges 2017-2019.

The Committee considered the report of the Manager for Performance and Specialist Advisory and Senior Specialist Advisor regarding the proposed hackney carriage and private hire licence fees, detailed in the report.

A copy of the current fees and charges was attached to the report at Appendix 1. There was no increase in fees proposed and this was detailed in the report. Figure 2 of the report forecasted a net surplus of £36,834 by the end of 2019/2020. The Licensing team intended to use the surplus made in 2014-2017 to carry out initiatives such as implementing the proposed penalty points scheme, undertaking an enhanced enforcement role, additional training and resourcing an additional Specialist Advisor on Licensing and Enforcement. It was proposed by Councillor Dow and seconded by Councillor Belsey that officers investigate the possibility of using the surplus to recruit an administrator to support the Licensing function. Officers agreed to investigate and report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED: (Unanimous) (1) That the publication of the proposed hackney carriage and private hire licence fees detailed in the report in accordance with statutory requirements be approved.

(2) That the fees outlined come into effect from 1 April 2017.

(3) That officers investigate the possibility of using part of the surplus to fund an administrative post in support of the licensing function.

14 Taxi Livery Policy.

The Committee received a verbal report from the Senior Specialist Advisor regarding the Council's Taxi Livery Policy.

The Senior Specialist Advisor reported that a member of the trade who operated larger vehicles had requested the ability to use a larger sign than was currently permitted under the Livery Policy.

The Committee unanimously agreed not to undertake a review of the Livery Policy and instead delegated responsibility to the Senior Specialist Advisor and the Chair of Licensing Committee to resolve this individual case.

RESOLVED: (Unanimous) That power be delegated to the Senior Specialist Advisor in consultation with the Chair of Licensing Committee to resolve the individual case discussed.

15 Taxi Forum.

The Committee discussed Councillor Belsey's proposal of reintroducing the taxi forum. The taxi forum offered an opportunity for members of the trade to meet with Council officers and discuss any issues that had arisen.

It was proposed by Councillor Belsey and seconded by Councillor Freebody to reintroduce the taxi forum and initially trial meetings twice a year. The Committee were unanimously in support of the proposal.

RESOLVED (Unanimous): That the taxi forum be introduced and initially take place twice a year.

16 Date of future meeting.

The Chairman proposed that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee be moved to the 20 March 2017. This was agreed unanimously by the Committee.

RESOLVED: (Unanimous) That the date of the next Licensing Committee be moved from 13 March 2017 to 20 March 2017.

The meeting closed at 7.12 pm

Councillor Dow (Chairman)