

Licensing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Ditchling and Telscombe Rooms, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB, on 12 January 2023 at 10:30am

Present:

Councillor Sean MacLeod (Chair); Councillor Christine Robinson (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Liz Boorman, Roy Clay, Johnny Denis, Isabelle Linington and Emily O'Brien

Officers in attendance:

Jo Dunk (Regulatory Services Lead), Dee O'Leary (Senior Specialist Adviser, Licensing), Jennifer Norman (Committee Officer, Democratic Services) and Dr Michele Wilkinson (Lawyer, Housing & Regulatory)

9 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 July 2022 were submitted and approved and the Chair authorised to sign them as a correct record, subject to the following amendment, shown underlined below, with the resolution for Minute No 7 to read:

Resolved:

- 1) That it be agreed that a feasibility study be undertaken and that the Lead for Regulatory Services be authorised to investigate grant funding to cover the costs of the feasibility study; and
- 2) That it be agreed that as an immediate incentive, the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Guidance as set out in Appendix 1, be amended so that low and zero emission vehicles may have an extended licence span of 15 years.

10 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sam Adeniji, Graham Amy and Linda Wallraven.

11 Declarations of interest

There were none.

12 Urgent items

There were none.

13 Written questions from councillors

There were none.

14 Approval of Licensing Fees 2023/24

The Committee considered the report which sought its recommendation to Full Council that the Licensing fees proposed as set out in Appendix 1, be applied beginning 1 April 2023.

The Regulatory Services Lead (RSL) presented the report, highlighting that it had been a challenging year for the Authority in continuing to meet the demands of delivering a broad range of services within the District. As a result, there was a recommended increase to some of the proposed fees, as set out in Appendix 1, in order to supplement the increased costs of delivering services within the District.

The Committee highlighted a number of errors in the report, in particular the calculations shown within the table in paragraph 2.5. The Committee requested that the table be amended to show the correct figures prior to the recommendation to Full Council to approve the Licensing fees. The RSL agreed.

Members discussed the proposals including an increase from £65 to £72 in the fees for 6-month DBS checks undertaken by the Council, changes in tattoo and skin piercing fees, previous and future engagement with the Trade, and how the Authority's taxi rates compared with those of other local authorities in the surrounding areas.

Members requested that a Finance Officer be present during future meetings of the Committee when the Licensing fees reports were considered. The RSL agreed to ask the relevant officer to attend.

In addition, the Committee requested that the Chair and the Vice-Chair be invited to the Taxi Trade forum scheduled for February 2023. The RSL agreed.

Resolved:

That Full Council be recommended to approve the Licensing fees proposed within Appendix 1 to apply from 1 April 2023, subject to the 6-month DBS check fee remaining at £65, as opposed to the proposed increase to £72.

15 Consideration of Feedback from the Trade

The Committee considered the report which requested that it review feedback from the Trade and decide between the options set out in paragraph 3.1.

The Regulatory Services Lead (RSL) presented the report.

Discussions included the reasons why financial circumstances were not

considered as exceptional circumstances, frequency of testing for older vehicles, and feedback received during Taxi Forums throughout the year.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Guidance be immediately amended to allow for older vehicles in age to be newly licensed, as set out in paragraph 3.1; and
- 2) That the age limits of the vehicles be reviewed when the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Guidance is next considered by the Committee in June 2023.

16 Further supporting the transition to lower emission vehicles or zero emission vehicles in the taxi and private hire sector

The Committee considered the report which requested that Members agree that as an immediate incentive, the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Guidance be amended to allow low emission and hybrid vehicles to have an extended licence span.

The Regulatory Services Lead (RSL) presented the report.

Discussions included concerns regarding the timeline, evidence supporting the Officer's recommendation, the age of vehicles allowed, as set out in paragraph 3.2 (i), and upcoming feasibility studies.

Resolved:

That the proposed addition to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Guidance be approved, as set out in paragraph 3.2 (i) of the report.

17 Dates of meetings

That it be noted that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 9 March 2023, in the Ditchling and Telscombe Rooms, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB, commencing at 10:30am.

In addition, the Committee noted that the proposed dates for Licensing Committee for 2023/24 were Thursday 22 June 2023 (10:30am) and Thursday 14 December 2024 (10:30am), with any additional meetings of the Committee being scheduled as and when required. These dates would be presented to Full Council for approval.

The meeting ended at 11:54am.

Councillor Sean MacLeod (Chair)