

Licensing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Ditchling and Telscombe Rooms, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB, on 7 July 2022 at 10:30am

Present:

Councillor Christine Robinson (Vice-Chair, in the Chair);
Councillors Sam Adeniji, Roy Clay, Johnny Denis, Isabelle Linington and
Linda Wallraven

Officers in attendance:

Jo Dunk (Regulatory Services Lead), Jennifer Norman (Committee Officer, Democratic Services), and Dr Michele Wilkinson (Lawyer, Housing & Regulatory)

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2022 were submitted and approved, and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Graham Amy, Liz Boorman, Sean MacLeod (Chair) and Emily O'Brien.

3 Declarations of interest

There were none.

4 Urgent items

There were none.

5 Written questions from councillors

There were none.

6 Approval of additional Licensing Fee 2022/23

The Committee considered the report which sought its recommendation to Full Council that the additional licensing fee proposed within paragraph 1 be applied from September 2022.

The Regulatory Services Lead (RSL) presented the report, highlighting that all new applicants and current licensed drivers would be required to adhere to a 6 monthly DBS check, which could be undertaken through the gov.uk website

or, alternatively, could be processed by Lewes District Council. The cost of the service for the Council would require an increase from £40 to £65 to take into account an administration fee, which would apply from September 2022 onward.

Discussions included automatic reminders in respect of the 6 monthly DBS check, the amount of time it took the Council to process applications, whether there was any way to make the process more cost-effective and what costs were covered by the proposed increase in the Licensing fee. It was also noted that the Council had absorbed staff costs of this service over the previous two years.

The Committee queried the cost of the fee if the process was undertaken through the gov.uk website. The RSL explained that she did not know the exact fee, but that it was less than the £40 currently charged by the Council.

Members requested that a follow-up report come back to the Committee with details relating to DBS checks which were processed through the gov.uk website versus those processed by the Council. The RSL agreed to add that detail to future annual fee setting reports.

Resolved:

That Full Council be recommended to approve the Licensing Fee, as set out in the report, for the 6 monthly DBS check.

7 Supporting the transition to low vehicle or zero emission vehicles in the taxi and private hire sector

The Committee considered the report presented by the Regulatory Services Lead (RSL) which asked Members to examine ways of supporting the transition to low or zero emission vehicles in the taxi and private hire vehicle sector.

Discussions included stand-alone charging points, details, costs and funding resources in respect of the of the feasibility studies and use of the Council's internal green consultancy.

The Committee commented on Officer errors throughout the guidance, as set out in Appendix 1, and minor changes to the document which Members had not previously been made aware of. The Committee requested that, in future, Members be made aware of any changes to guidance documents.

Officers noted that although there were some corrections of a minor nature that needed to be made within the guidance document, the errors within the document did not affect the Committee's previous decisions. Officers further noted that the corrections would be made shortly and that the Committee would be informed of any amendments to the guidance document going forward.

The Chair queried the timescale for implementation of the feasibility study. The RSL noted that, if the recommendations were agreed by the Committee, it was her intention to begin the process as soon as possible.

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.

8 Date of next meeting

That it be noted that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 13 October 2022 in the Ditchling and Telscombe Rooms, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB, commencing at 10:30am.

The meeting ended at 11:23am.

Councillor Christine Robinson (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)