



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Wednesday, 13 December 2017 at 9.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh (Chairman)
Councillor Sue Austen
Councillor Mike Bradley
Councillor Paul Cox
Councillor Neil Hitchin
Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Chris Morris
Councillor Carol Sennitt
Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Stuart Smith

OFFICERS

Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager
Stewart Broome – Senior Licensing Officer
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Tracy Couper – Democratic Services Manager

23. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Allan.

24. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no interests declared.

25. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 8 November 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- The inclusion of Councillor Stuart Smith's name in the list of apologies.
- The amendment of the first sentence of the fourth paragraph of Minute 21 subsection 4.1.1/4.1.8 on page 6 to read:

‘Councillor Neil Hitchin thought the question was whether the Council wanted the colour scheme for its own branding rather than to promote private enterprise.’

26. **CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to report.

27. **REVIEW OF LICENSING FEES**

Further to Minute 14 of the meeting held on 11 October 2017, the Committee considered a report, S198 previously circulated, detailing the comments submitted in response to the Taxi fee increase notice published on 16 November 2017.

The Senior Licensing Officer reported that all licence holders (approximately 200 individuals) were advised of the fee increase, the reasons for it, and the consultation deadline date that they would need to observe if they wished to submit an objection. The Officer also advised that the required public notice had been published correctly. During the consultation period one objection was received, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Chairman queried if a similar level of fee increase would be required in future years. The Senior Licensing Officer reminded Members of the previous decision of the Committee to work towards recovery of the true costs of administering the Licensing functions of the Council and this position was likely to be reached by 2019 or 2020. From then on, it was envisaged that only inflationary increases would be required. Councillor Bradley commented that Members should not go against the decision made previously, but queried the possible impact of the proposal in the objector’s response regarding the meter rate changing after the first 1/10 mile instead of after the first mile. The Senior Licensing Officer stated that this would have no impact for longer journeys but it was unlikely that it would be supported by the Taxi Trade collectively, as the ‘flag rate’ for the first mile protected them for short journeys. Detailed calculations would be required to determine the overall impact, but the Licensing Team did monitor the impact of external factors such as petrol prices, inflation and insurance costs on the Trade.

Councillors Sharp and Morris entered the meeting at 9.45am and Councillor Cox entered the meeting at 9.46am

Councillor Bradley suggested that a general review of fare rates should be undertaken and Councillor Huffer concurred with this view, stating that the Council had a duty of care to do so.

Councillor Bradley asked if there had been an increase in the number of drivers and the Senior Licensing Officer reported that one company had licensed 13 new drivers as a result of winning schools contracts, but otherwise the numbers remained fairly stable. This Council had the lowest number of drivers compared to other Districts within the County. The Chairman referred to her personal experience of the difficulties of getting a Taxi before 9am and from the rail station after 11pm. Councillor Huffer commented that public

perception of the shortage of Taxis at peak times would need to be considered as part of any review.

The Senior Licensing Officer stated that he was not aware of any issue regarding Taxi provision, but that measures could be considered to improve availability during peak hours, such as an increase in fare rates after 11pm to encourage more drivers to work at this time.

Councillors asked about measures to ensure the safety of drivers operating at night and the Senior Licensing Officer reported that CCTV cameras or panic buttons could be installed in cabs by operators.

Councillor Smith questioned how our licensing fees compared with other Districts. The Senior Licensing Officer stated that the issue for this Council was to ensure that the licensing fee for each Licensing function recovered the costs of administering the Licence and that one Licensing function did not subsidise another. The Chairman acknowledged this point but asked if a general overview could be given as to whether our licensing fees were significantly different to other local Districts. The Senior Licensing Officer reported that there was some variation between neighbouring Districts for different Licensing functions but not of an extreme nature, and the level of fees charged by this Council reflected the higher level of service provided in many cases.

Councillor Sennitt highlighted the fact that there had been only one response in objection from the 200 Licence holders consulted. The Senior Licensing Officer stated that a clear justification for the fee increases was posted on the Licence holders' webpage referring to the fact that fees had not increased for 5 years and explaining the reasons why the increase was required now. He believed that it was a reflection of the trust that now had been developed with the Taxi Trade and the improvements made such as online forms, etc, that so few objections had been received. Councillor Bradley commended the Licensing Team's work in improving relations and stated that they might be a 'victim of their own success' by having taken steps to improve standards of service and address the fees issue earlier than neighbouring Councils.

It was resolved:

That having considered the one response received at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, approval be given to the fees as proposed in the public notice to come into effect immediately.

28. **LICENSING OFFICER'S UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report, S199 previously circulated, which updated the Licensing Committee on the work of officers since the last meeting. The Senior Licensing Officer advised Members of the latest position regarding the Taxi Rank amendments in Ely and the Licensing service to be provided over the Christmas period. In addition, the Senior Licensing Officer updated the Committee on the guidance provided to Taxi/Private Hire drivers on Christmas decorations in cabs and the outcome of two Taxi Sub-Committees held recently.

The Senior Licensing Officer also gave a presentation to the Committee on the following emerging Licensing issues for 2018:

- Animal Welfare – Establishment Licensing Review
- Select Committee Review of Licensing - Conclusions
- Safeguarding
- Taxi Updates
- Case Law

The Senior Licensing Officer briefed Members on the proposals for the Trust 2 Ride Safeguarding Training to be compulsory for all Taxi/Private Hire drivers within the District. The Senior Licensing Officer reported that Trust 2 Ride would be the delivery method for new drivers but alternative options were being considered for existing drivers, including internal delivery by himself using the comprehensive training pack used and provided by Cambridge City. The Licensing Officer suggested that Members of the Committee might wish to attend a training session and Members commented that a pilot session could be run for them.

It was resolved:

That the update report be noted.

29. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee considered its Forward Agenda Plan.

The Senior Licensing Officer stated that a Street Trading Consent for Sutton would need to be considered at the January meeting of the Committee and the review of the Gambling Act Policy would be due in April 2018.

The Chairman asked that the thanks of the Committee be placed on record for the work of the Senior Licensing Officer and his Team in 2017.

It was resolved:

That the Licensing Committee Forward Agenda Plan be noted and the following item be added to the Agenda Plan for 10 January 2018:

Street Trading Consent – Sutton

The meeting closed at 11.10am