

Licensing and Public Safety Committee

Tuesday, 3 February 2009

Present: Councillor Iris Smith (Chair), and Councillors Judith Boothman, David Dickinson, Doreen Dickinson, Anthony Gee, Pat Haughton, Keith Iddon, Hasina Khan, Marion Lowe, Debra Platt, John Walker and Stella Walsh

09.LPS.28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of the Vice-Chair (Councillor Edward Smith) and Councillors Catherine Hoyle, Thomas McGowan and Ralph Snape.

09.LPS.29 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There was no declaration of interest by any of the Committee Members in any of the agenda items.

09.LPS.30 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Public Safety Committee held on 10 December 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

In relation to Minutes 08.LPS.24 (Licensing of Limousines – Procedures and Conditions) and 08.LPS.25 (Private Hire Vehicle Plate Exemptions – Conditions of Licensing), the Licensing Manager advised the Committee that a Workshop would be held shortly with representatives of the local taxi trade to discuss the proposed policies and procedures agreed at the last meeting for consultation purposes.

09.LPS.31 ANNUAL REVIEW OF LICENSING FEES FOR 2009/10

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Governance reviewing the licensing fees for which the Council were able to determine and implement in 2009/10.

The report recommended a general average increase of up to 3% in the hackney carriage/private hire licensing fees, and other miscellaneous fees, outlined in the schedule attached to the submitted report with effect from 1 April 2009. The Council had no discretion to adjust the fees associated with the Licensing Act 2003 which were fixed by the Government and the report did not propose any revision of the fees for licences issued under the Gambling Act 2005.

The proposals, if supported, would need to be advertised over a period of 28 days. Any opposing representations would be reported to a future meeting in advance of the final determination of the fee structure.

RESOLVED – That the revised licensing fees and charges, as set out in the submitted report, be approved for adoption with effect from 1 April 2009, subject to the required advertising and consideration of any subsequent representations.

09.LPS.32 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976 - TESTING OF HACKNEY CARRIAGES AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Governance on recommendations to revise the arrangements for the testing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles by allowing the concept of a 13 month taxi test certificate.

Following introduction of new conditions for both the testing of vehicles in November 2008 and the taxi door signs and plates in June 2008, under which the expiry date for either the vehicle test or the vehicle licence (whichever came first) was required to be shown on the taxi plate, representatives of the taxi trade had requested the Council to consider extending the taxi licence period up to 13 months.

While the current arrangements allowed vehicle operators to synchronise the taxi vehicle test date with the licence expiry date, operators were experiencing difficulties in accomplishing the provision. The approval of the concept of a 13 month taxi test certificate, mirroring the Vehicle Operating Standards Agency (VOSA) rules for the 13 month Ministry of Transport Test (MOT), would enable the expiry dates for both the taxi tests and the taxi licences to be aligned more easily. This, in turn, would improve customer services and help to reduce operating costs.

RESOLVED – 1. That the proposals to allow taxi test certificates to be valid for 13 months in order to ease their alignment with the period of taxi licences be approved.

2. That the Director of Corporate Governance to authorised the implement the new procedure forthwith.

09.LPS.33 LICENSING AND REGISTRATION - SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2008 TO 9 JANUARY 2009

The Committee received a report of the Director of Corporate Governance on the work of the Licensing Section showing the number of licences and permits issued, registrations recorded, enforcement activity undertaken and complaints dealt with between 1 November 2008 and 9 January 2009.

The Licensing Enforcement Officer pointed out that the report did not reflect the whole of the work of the Licensing Section, as not all of its work resulted in the instigation of enforcement action. The Chair suggested that future reports be expanded to reflect more accurately and comprehensively the wide range of the Licensing Section's responsibilities and activities.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Chair