

LICENSING POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Licensing Policy Committee held on Wednesday 5 November 2008 at 9.30am in the executive meeting room in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Present

Councillor Les Stevens (chair)
Councillors Margaret Adair
Lee Mason
Linda Symes
April Windebank

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Fuller, Margaret Foster and Jacqui Hancock.

12. Declaration of Members' Interests in Accordance with Standing Order No 14 (AI 1)

There were no declarations made.

13. Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 26 September 2008 (AI 2)

(TAKE IN MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2008)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 26 September 2008 be agreed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

14. Minutes of the Licensing Sub Committee meetings held on 17 and 24 September 2008 (AI 3)

(TAKE IN MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 17 AND 24 SEPTEMBER 2008)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing Sub Committee meetings held on 17 and 24 September 2008 be agreed and signed by the appropriate chair as a correct record.

15. Review of Licensing Fees – Consideration of Objectives (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY THE LICENSING MANAGER)

Hamish Fowlie (Outlook (UK) Ltd), Carolyn Holmes (secretary of Streamline Taxis Ltd) and Bruce Hall (General Manager of Aqua Cars) were in attendance to submit their objections in person to the committee.

The Licensing Manager circulated three letters of representation, to all parties, received within the consultation period but after the despatch of the report from Alan Ellcome and Ian Ogilvie (National Federation Hackney Carriage Drivers) and Carolyn Holmes (Company Secretary Streamline Taxi Ltd). The Licensing Manager then introduced her report and reminded members that the original decision to increase the existing level of fees payable in respect of private hire and hackney carriage licences, was considered and taken at the meeting held on 26 September 2008. A public notice was advertised in The News on 1 October 2008. A new database has been purchased through the procurement process. The Licensing Manager also

reported that the proposed increase in charges would equate to an increase of 29p per week above the current fee level for vehicles benefiting from an extension of their vehicle licence and an increase in 35p per week for other vehicle licences.

Bruce Hall made the following points during his representations;

- Questioned why the fees hadn't been increased at a minimum since 2006 when it was realised that the database was first needed.
- Concern that the cost of the database had jumped considerably.
- The number of licensing staff has doubled and you are advertising for another enforcement officer. Questioned why additional posts are being advertised when you have an improved computer system.
- Questioned whether the alcohol licences were going to have an increase in fees too.
- Now being charged for livery stickers too.
- Feel we are being hit with hidden extras.
- Private hire vehicles are meeting their obligations and more so why the increase?
- Should cut cloth to suit budget. Licensing department will continue to operate without this database.
- Cannot justify in today's economic climate such a huge increase.
- Will this system benefit us?

Hamish Fowlie made the following points during his representations;

- I supply cars and drivers to Aqua and represent 50% of trade. Never indicated that we wanted or would accept such an increase.
- The Licensing Manager has manipulated the figures to pay for the database.
- £100k for a database, is this really best value with 10 staff?
- Costs for fuel, parts etc are all more expensive, too many rising costs.
- Increase cannot be absorbed.
- Increase unacceptable to us as a small business.

Carolyn Holmes made the following points during her representations;

- For years there were only two enforcement officers, then it was increased to three and now we are told there is a need for another.
- Various licensing functions, which cannot fund each other, but why has the fee for sex establishments been reduced?
- Deficit is only with the hackney carriages.
- If increase had been 3% from 2004 it still wouldn't be at this cost.

Sue Page, the Finance Manager, made the following points in response to questions raised during the hearing;

- Taxi fees do not currently cover costs, the increase will cover those costs and contribute to overheads.
- Private hire fees only meet direct costs, not overheads.
- If fees are not increased the department will run at a loss and money will have to be found elsewhere.

During debate, Val Lane (the Head of Financial Services) was called to the meeting to give independent financial advice to the committee.

RESOLVED that the proposed increase be spread over two years and that the fees are reviewed on an annual basis to take into account inflationary and any other increased costs.

REASONS: The committee was not satisfied that the proposed increase was reasonable and believed that there should have been smaller increases in previous years to lessen the impact on the trade.

16. Licensing Committee – Training for Members (AI 5)

The Licensing Manager reported that members will be aware that every Councillor sitting on the Licensing Committee must receive suitable training on the role and responsibilities of the Licensing Authority. Officers have therefore organised a day of training for Licensing Committee members for Thursday 14 May 2009 and a provisional date has been booked for Thursday 20 May 2010.

RESOLVED that Thursday 14 May 2009 be noted for a day of training for all members of the Licensing Committee.

The meeting concluded at 11.55am.

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Signed by the chair, Councillor Les Stevens.