

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 21 January 2014, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor J Alcock (Chairman)

Councillors:

P Ainsworth	J Holgate
I Brown	K Horkin
S Brunskill	S Knox
P Dowson	C Ross
R Hargreaves	G Scott
K Hind	M Thomas
S Hirst	

In attendance: Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Solicitor.

Also in attendance: Inspector Hassan Khan.

533 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor R Swarbrick.

534 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

535 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

536 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

537 GEOGRAPHIC POLICE INSPECTOR

The Chairman introduced Inspector Hassan Khan to Committee as the recently appointed Geographic Inspector for the Ribble Valley. He addressed Members on a number of issues including Clitheroe's night time economy, the number of officers at his disposal to deal with particular issues. He also informed Members about rural policing, issues at Rendezvous and KeyStreet which have late night licences, work being carried out to deter travelling criminals, new shift patterns for response officers and the future of Mellor Brook and Whalley Police Stations.

RESOLVED: That Inspector Khan be thanked for his useful update on policing in the Ribble Valley.

PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS' TEMPORARY LICENCES

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services referred to Minute 326 of Committee dated 17 September 2013 which had authorised her to consult on the proposal to remove temporary licences for private hire drivers and requiring all private hire drivers to pass the Knowledge Test and Steering to Success course prior to receiving a private hire driver licence.

As a result of that consultation the Council had received two responses within the time limit and one outside the timescale set. It was clear from the information received that all of those who had responded supported the proposal.

The Council had also compiled information on the numbers of temporary licences which were issued between 1 October and 31 October 2013 and the number of those licence holders who failed to complete the Steering to Success course, failed to pass the Knowledge Test or who simply did not apply for a full licence at the end of the 6 month temporary licence period. The information gained included:

- 65% of temporary licence holders do not obtain a full licence at the end of the 6 month temporary licence period.
- We only have definitive evidence that 34% of those issued with a temporary licence completed the Steering to Success course within the 6 month period.
- 53% of temporary licence holders do not pass the Knowledge Test within the 6 month period.

Committee was therefore asked to consider whether the Council should, in the light of the information set out above and the responses received to its consultation, continue to issue temporary licences. Committee were made aware of the likely consequences of ceasing to issue temporary licences, in particular in relation to existing drivers, prospective drivers and various other considerations.

Members then discussed the question of temporary licences and the perceived need to tighten up on the numbers of private hire drivers who were not progressing from temporary to full drivers' licences. They also questioned how the Knowledge Test was currently being operated.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree to remove the provision of temporary private hire drivers' licences with effect from 1 April 2014;
2. approve the proposal for a Knowledge Test to be completed verbally and that the fee for that should be set at £14.80; and

3. retain the limit of 4 attempts for the Knowledge Test but insist that those 4 tests should be taken within 1 calendar year rather than within 6 months as at present.

539 ANNUAL FEES AND CHARGES – HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES

The Solicitor asked Committee to determine the annual fees for hackney carriage and private hire driver licences. She set out the various legislation under which such licences were approved, the need to ensure fees were set purely to recover costs.

She commented that in recent years licence fees had generally been raised annually in line with inflation as the underlying costing assumptions had not changed. The Council was recommending raising those fees by reference to inflation based on 2.75%. The annual fees rounded up or down as most appropriate for 2014 from the 1 April would be as follows:

<u>TAXI LICENSING CHARGES</u>	
PRIVATE HIRE & HACKNEY CARRIAGE	2014 from 1 April
	£
Driver's Renewal/Annual Licence	56.90
Temporary/Six month Licence	28.45
	unless provision for temporary licence is removed by Committee
Replacement Driver's Badge	11.60
Vehicle Licences:	
ANNUAL – Up to 3 years old	159.05
6 MONTHS – Over 3 years but not exceeding 7 years	84.25
4 MONTHS – Over 7 years	60.00
Discount on previous Licence (1/12 th annual)	13.25
Transfer on Licence ownership	23.20
New or replacement:	
Plates	
Brackets	At cost plus 10% admin
Private Hire Operators Licence (From 1 December to 30 November) per annum for 5 vehicles or fewer, thereafter £11.75 per vehicle	147.45
Log books (100 sheets) each	1.55

Knowledge test – first one free - paper	7.40
- driven (if provision for temporary licence not removed by Committee)	14.80
In person (if provision for temporary licence removed by Committee)	14.80

Members questioned the relatively low level of proposed increase and asked how Ribble Valley compared to other neighbouring authorities. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services commented that whilst our scale of fees was relatively low, other Council's operated their licensing regime in a different way. Councillor Thomas volunteered to undertake some comparative research on licence fees across Lancashire and report back to a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to set the current fees with effect from 1 April 2014 as included above.

540 SCRAP METAL DEALERS' ACT 2013

The Solicitor referred to Minute 327 of Committee dated 17 September 2013 and now sought Committee's approval to the revised scheme of delegation of decision-making and functions under the Scrap Metal Dealers' Act 2013.

She further reported that having operated the provisions of the Act since October 2013, it had become apparent that it would be helpful if the scheme was revisited. The main amendments are to the sections dealing with the application for the grant, renewal or variation of an application or the revocation of a licence.

Members then discussed this matter in some detail.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the scheme of delegation and decision-making functions as included at Appendix 1 to the report.

541 MINUTES OF RIBBLE VALLEY SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

Committee received, for information, the minutes of the Ribble Valley Safety Advisory Group dated Thursday, 5 December 2013.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

542 TAXI ENFORCEMENT OPERATION

The Solicitor informed Committee of the results of an inspection of licenced private hire and hackney carriage vehicles carried out in December 2013. The Council's Taxi Enforcement Officer had carried out an inspection of 30 licenced private hire and hackney carriage vehicles on 7 December 2013 in a joint operation with the Police, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency and HM Revenue and Customs.

Of the 30 vehicles inspected, 24 were found to be of the required standard, the drivers of 2 were served with Prohibition Notices requiring them to withdraw their

vehicles from operation immediately and 4 were served with Advisory Notices requiring work to be carried out to their vehicles within 7 days. The results of the inspection and other advice to users of private hire and hackney carriage vehicles was issued to the press and this matter had received good press coverage.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Diane Rice (414418).