

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday 7 November 2023 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

Smith (Chairman), Clarke, Coburn, Collins, Farmer, Forster, Vernon and Woods

In attendance:

Officers:

Mark Jaggard, Executive Director - Place

Neil Hince, Environmental Health & Licensing Manager

Tom Payne, Head of Environmental & Community Services (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council)

Emma Coles, Licensing Team Leader, Shared Licensing Services

Louise Misselbrook, Shared Legal Services

Jenny Murton, Committee and Member Services Officer

Emma Evans, Committee and Member Services Officer

12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 were agreed, confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Proposed by Councillor Collins; seconded by Councillor Vernon.

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Councillor Delaney. Councillor Woods informed Committee Services in advance she may be slightly delayed. Councillor Clarke arrived at 7:02pm.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements.

The Executive Director – Place apologised that due to resourcing and capacity issues in the Shared Licensing Service three items which had been due to be considered were now delayed until February's Committee: These were:

- Review of the Taxi Licensing Policy,
- draft Gambling Act Policy review and
- adoption of the Street Trader Policy following public consultation.

Members accepted this explanation regarding these items. It was questioned if this delay would cause the Council any problems regarding timescales.

The Chairman replied there were no specific deadlines for reviewing these policies.

A Member expressed surprise that there had been no responses to the street trading consultation. The Licensing Team Leader explained that as the policy was almost identical to the previous version, which itself had been consulted upon, that was likely to be the reason why the relevant authorities did not comment.

A Member queried if an additional Licensing Committee meeting could be arranged before February. The Chairman commented that the Shared Licensing Service needed the time available before the February meeting in order to produce the necessary documents and reports.

16 FEES AND CHARGES

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the report to consider the fees and charges for taxi licensing services relating to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, drivers, and operators. It was recommended that the 2023/24 fees and charges should remain the same for the 2024/25 financial year.

A Member asked whether the fees should be lowered to reflect the increase which was introduced in April 2023, which both included the correction from the previous year's published fees, and the inflation increase. In addition, the taxi trade was also affected by the cost-of-living crisis. It was suggested that there is a predicted surplus in the Council's budget for 2024/25 and this could be used to lower fees to assist taxi drivers.

The Executive Director – Place confirmed that the predicted surplus was for one year only, and at this stage is only an end of financial year prediction. He also highlighted that the cost of the Shared Licensing Service to Council had increased and was due to increase further this financial year.

The Chairman highlighted that if fees were reduced and not frozen then a consultation would still be required which would cost the Council additional money. The Licensing Team Leader confirmed this was correct.

Councillor Woods arrived at 7:13pm.

A Member highlighted that the fees and charges should be zero for wheelchair accessible vehicles and also for 100% electric vehicles up to 31 March 2025, as agreed at the February Licensing Committee. Officers confirmed there was a mistake in the table at Appendix 1 in the agenda pack. The Team Leader confirmed it is zero in the published fees and charges on the Council's website.

A Member asked if the fees for 100% electric vehicle licences could be frozen for a further year as people make investments on these types of vehicles.

The Chairman stated that he felt that before any decision was made on extending or changing the zero rate charges, evidence would be needed to show the effect of the incentives. That evidence was not available at the meeting.

The Executive Director – Place highlighted that Licensing Committee were not considering the fees for 2025/26 at that time but suggested that Committee do consider these matters in a year's time when considering the 2025/26 fees.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Collins; seconded by: Councillor Clarke. The recommendation was unanimously agreed.

Decision

The Committee agreed that the 2023/24 fees and charges relating to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, drivers and operator's licences should remain the same for the 2024/25 financial year.

17 REPORTS FROM LICENSING HEARINGS

The reports from the Licensing Hearings were noted.

The meeting closed at 7.22 pm