

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday 7 February 2023 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

Wildsmith (Chairman), Farmer (Vice-Chairman), Axam, Butler, Coburn, Delaney, Engström, Forster and Smith

In attendance:

Officers:

Mark Jaggard	Executive Director, Place
Emma Coles	Licensing Team Leader, Shared Licensing Services
Rob Draper	Regulatory Services Manager - Basingstoke and Deane
Neil Hince	Environmental Health & Licensing Manager
Louise Misselbrook	Shared Legal Services
Jenny Murton	Committee Services Officer

17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair proposed the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2022 which were then seconded by Councillor Coburn. Councillor Farmer formally abstained from voting on the Minutes as he was absent from the meeting, Councillors Axam, Delaney, Engström and Forster also indicated that they would have to abstain as they had not attended the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2022 were then signed as a correct record.

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Collins and Lamb.

Councillor Axam was a substitute for Councillor Collins and Councillor Engström was a substitute for Councillor Lamb.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Forster declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 due to being a Hampshire County Councillor.

20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

21 PROPOSED LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24

The Regulatory Services Manager summarised the report, reminding the Committee: these are annual fees and are a mixture of statutory charges (appendix 2) and those that can be set by Hart District Council (Appendix 1); and that it was only the taxi fees and charges proposed that needed to be consulted on.

The Regulatory Services Manager highlighted that the fees relating to Private Hire vehicle and Hackney Carriage vehicle licenses were incorrectly published in 2022/23 Fees and Charges. The rate in 2021/22 was £250.00. The correct figure for 2022/23, adjusted to reflect inflation should have been £258.00. However, the actual figure quoted in the published fees and charges was £239.00

Members questioned:

- The percentage increase in proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle fees for 2023/24, and that due to the error in the fees last year, the proposed increase is greater than 10%.
- The proposed increase in fees and charges for Street Traders.
- The length of the consultation period for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle fees and charges – this was confirmed as 28 days.
- How the proposed fees and charges were linked into the Council's proposed Budget for 2023/24.
- If previous consultations on the Private Hire vehicle and Hackney Carriage fees and charges had influenced a final Budget in previous years.
- How the error in the published version of last year's Private Hire vehicle and Hackney Carriage vehicle licenses figures was made, who was responsible and what actions had been taken to prevent this reoccurring.
- The cost of charges for Wheelchair Accessible vehicles, and if this fee was statutory or could be reduced or frozen.

The Regulatory Services Manager confirmed that Private Hire Vehicle and Hackney Carriage fees and charges are not statutory and are set by the individual Local Authority.

Members discussed version control of Council documents and reports and queried if a more formal process could be introduced for this. The Executive Director, Place reassured the Members that steps had already been taken to improve version control.

Members also questioned:

- The impact the proposed increase in charges and fees could have on the community, traders, taxi drivers and their families.
- The differences between the taxi trade in Hart and Basingstoke and Deane and the incentives to work in both areas.
- What calculations officers had made to determine the figures in the report for fees and charges – this was explained by the Executive Director,

Place who referenced the current rate of inflation (as set out in the Cabinet papers of 2 February 2023).

- Whether any changes could be made to the non-statutory proposed fees and charges that the Council sets.
- The use of electric vehicles (EV) as taxis and why these are not included in the report.
- The Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, and if anything else should be included within the proposed Fees and Charges List to encourage the use of more electric vehicles.

The Shared Licensing Team Leader reminded Members that Hart taxis need to be less than three years old when they first join the fleet and be a certain size.

Members debated:

- Why electric vehicles were not included in the proposed Fees and Charges list for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire for 2023/24.
- Possible funding that may be available to encourage or fund electric vehicles to operate as taxis in Hart in the future.
- The amount of enforcement that is currently carried out on street traders.
- Why the percentage increase in proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire fees for 2023/24 is more than 10% when compared with published fees for 2022/23.
- Whether the report accurately reflects Hart's Climate Emergency Declaration.
- The cost to the Council if fees and charges were frozen at last year's prices.
- The operation of buses and taxis in Hart and Hampshire as a whole.

Regarding the use of electric vehicles, the Chair questioned if a temporary time period for a reduced fee was possible, and the Licensing Team Leader confirmed that it was.

DECISION

Members voted on a recommendation to go to Full Council, proposed by Councillor Forster and seconded by Councillor Smith, to amend the Proposed Licensing Fees and Charges 2023/24 for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire to include:

The fees for all Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicle licenses for 100% electric vehicles to be zero for a period of 2 years as an incentive to encourage more electric vehicles in Hart district.

This recommendation was carried, and the result of the recorded vote was:

For: Axam, Butler, Coburn, Delaney, Farmer, Forster, Smith, Wildsmith

Against: None

Abstention: Engström

Members voted on a second recommendation to go to Full Council, proposed by Councillor Forster and seconded by Councillor Smith, to amend the Proposed Licensing Fees and Charges 2023/24 for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire to include:

The rate for all Wheelchair Accessible vehicle licenses to be zero for a period of 2 years as an incentive to encourage more wheelchair accessible vehicles in Hart district

The result of the recorded vote was unanimous and For was carried.

Members voted on a third recommendation, proposed by Councillor Forster and seconded by Councillor Farmer, to amend the Proposed Licensing Fees and Charges 2023/24 to:

No Fees and Charges to be raised by more than 10%.

This recommendation was not carried, and the result of the recorded vote was:

For: Coburn, Farmer and Forster.

Against: Axam, Butler, Delaney, Engström, Smith, Wildsmith

Abstention: None

A Member queried if holding a Licensing meeting earlier in the year would allow more time before Full Council to debate proposed fees and charges in the future. The Executive Director, Place explained why meetings were held in this timescale but agreed it could be something that was explored for future years.

The Committee:

- approved the proposed fees and charges for consultation as set out in Appendix 1, and pending decision by Full Council this is to include:
 1. **The fee for all Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicle licenses for 100% electric vehicles would be zero for a period of 2 years.**
 2. **The fee for all Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle licenses to be zero for a period of 2 years.**
- agreed that should there be no objections to the fees and charges, or any objections are subsequently withdrawn, then the fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 are set,
- noted the statutory fees and charges as set out in Appendix 2.

This was proposed by Councillor Delaney and seconded by Councillor Butler and the results of the recorded vote were:

For: Axam, Butler, Delaney, Engström, Smith, Wildsmith

Against: Coburn, Farmer, Forster

Abstention: None

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm