

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 1 June 2010 commencing at 5.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. Pett (Chairman)

Cllrs, Abraham, Mrs Broomby, Brown, Cooke, McInnes, Orridge, Mrs Parkin, Piper, Waller and Wigg.

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Darrington and Davison.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted that on the minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 25 February, at 'also present' Mr Cooper was the 'Chief Inspector' not the District Commander and Cllrs. Mrs Morris and McInnes had attended the meeting as 'observers only'. At Minute 3 the words '1 Pembury Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2HS' were omitted from the title of the minute.

Resolved: That, subject to the above changes, the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 26 January 2010, Sub-Committees held on 8 February 2010, 25 February 2010 and 15 April 2010 and the Extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 11 May 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

15. LICENSING ANNUAL REPORT – 2009/10 (Report No. 4)

The Licensing Partnership Manager introduced this item and highlighted that 2009/10 had been a busy year for licensing across the partnership, with Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) joining from 2 January 2010.

Licences

There were a number of processes, in relation to taxi licences, to finalise across the partnership. Work was currently being undertaken to set down a single practice for the issuing of taxi licence plates, licences and badges across the three authorities in the licensing partnership, Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and MBC.

Following a query it was explained that, as far as possible, the three authorities were seeking to harmonise taxi licence fees and this would help produce efficiencies and costs savings. However as local authorities could not make a profit from the issuing of taxi licences and costs to each authority varied slightly, for example in compliance tests, there would always be slight differences in the fees charged across the partnership.

At the request of the Chairman, the Licensing Partnership Manager agreed to send comprehensive profit and loss data, for the year 2009/10, to all Members of the Licensing Committee. This would also contain information on savings made through the partnership.

In relation to fees issued by the Council under the Licensing Act, 2003, it was explained that fees were set by government and the Council had no discretion to vary these fees. Across local authorities nationally the cost of administration was generally not met by the income received from the issuing of licences.

Statement of Licensing Policy

It had been three years since the last Statement of Licensing Policy had been agreed and the current policy would run until January 2011. A revised policy would be produced and the Council was to undertake a 12 week consultation starting in July 2010.

Enforcement

Work had been undertaken through the Kent Community Alcohol Partnership (KCAP) in partnership with Kent County Council Trading Standards and Kent Police. Underage drinking had been targeted in Edenbridge, the work had focused not only working with the traders to tackle this issue, but also engaging with young people and focusing on education. The evaluation of the project in Edenbridge was very favourable and reductions in anti-social behaviour had been recorded. Meetings would continue in Edenbridge every six months to monitor the situation. The project had now moved onto a second scheme in Swanley, Swanley Village and Hextable. Work was being undertaken with Community Development and targeted through Swanley Technical College.

Enforcement had also taken place at Sevenoaks Railway Station, where only 73 taxis licensed by Meteor on behalf of South Eastern can work at the station. However the Committee noted that enforcement could only be undertaken when a taxi was witnessed taking a fare and leaving the station property.

Member Training

Member training for Licensing Hearings would have been arranged on 30 June, at 2 p.m. And this covered foundation training for new Members of the Committee and more tailored training for existing Members.

Members of the Committee who could not attend the training would be sent the relevant literature from the session.

Licensing Web Pages

The Licensing pages on the Council's website were currently being reviewed for any necessary amendments or changes.

Licensing Applications

It was noted that despite the economic climate the number of licence applications, for both new licences and variations to existing licences, had remained consistent and the Council's targets had been achieved. The Council also issued a high number of Temporary Events Notices.

In relation to Gambling Licences it was noted that all fees had been paid in 2009/10.

As taxi licences were issued every three years, two thirds of the revenue had been put to the following two financial years to spread the revenue across the three year period.

Licensing Partnership Revenue Fees

All three authorities in the licensing partnership had increased income in 2009/10. Within the partnership, Sevenoaks had issued 31% of premises licences and 40% of Temporary Events Notices in 2009/10.

Licensing Hearings

In 2009/10 the Committee held ten Licensing Hearings and two Review Hearings under the Licensing Act 2003.

Taxi Licensing

It was noted that as the Assistant Licensing Manager was responsible for day to day operations at the Council it had been considered appropriate for her to be the Lead Signatory on taxi licences.

In relation to the future of the Licensing Partnership it was highlighted that it was necessary to have a period of consolidation before a fourth authority was to join. The partnership had had a challenging year and still had some small IT issues to resolve before it could move forward. It was noted that the current operational model would allow a fourth authority to join the partnership much quicker.

Following a query it was explained that the number of local authorities that could join the licensing partnership would be limited to four without a review of the current management structure. However in order to accommodate more authorities the physical space would be required to accommodate the central administration function.

Resolved: That the contents of the Annual Report be noted

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 6:10 P.M.

Chairman

