

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee
held on 13 October 2010 commencing at 6.10 p.m.

Present: Cllr. Pett (Chairman)

Cllrs Abraham, Mrs Broomby, Cooke, Darrington, Mrs. Dawson, McInnes, Orridge, Mrs Parkin, Waller and Wigg.

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Brown, Davison and Piper.

17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved: That, the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 1 June 2010 and the Sub-Committee held on 8 June 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Councillors present declared a personal interest by virtue of knowing Cllr. John Underwood, who was a taxi driver in the District.

Cllrs. Mrs. Dawson, McInnes, Mrs. Parkin and Pett declared personal interests by virtue of knowing Colin Arnell, who was a taxi driver in the District.

Cllr. Mrs Dawson declared a personal interest by virtue of using taxis as her only form of transport.

19. ADDRESS FROM MR SIMMONDS

The Chairman allowed Mr Simmonds, who was a taxi driver in Sevenoaks, to address the meeting. Mr Simmonds distributed a report to Members of the Committee which provided more detail on the issues he wanted to raise. He asked Members to give consideration to conducting a feasibility study to gauge the level of unmet demand in Sevenoaks, including Sevenoaks station. He felt that a limit should be reintroduced on the number of taxi licence plates that were issued by the Council. In his opinion, there was a surplus of taxi drivers in the area given the amount of available business.

The Licensing Partnership Manager informed Members that the taxi rank at Sevenoaks station was private property and that permits for taxis using the rank were issued by Meteor on behalf of Southeastern. However, he stated that Meteor had not been enforcing the permit system. He also stated that although it was a condition of taxi drivers' licence that they must obtain a separate permit to use the station taxi rank, the Council was not able to enforce this at the taxi rank.

The Licensing Partnership Manager informed Members that Meteor had recently limited the number of permits it would issue for the station to 110, and their intention

is to reduce this number to 90 permits although it would take some time for the full effect of this to be felt.

Members discussed whether the Council should look at holding a feasibility study into unmet/overmet demand . Members were advised that there were a number of complexities and that the matter needed to be thoroughly investigated before any decision was taken. It was agreed that officers would be asked to provide a full report into the issue at the Committee's next meeting.

20. HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENSING: PROPOSED FARE CHARGE INCREASE

The Licensing Partnership Manager informed Members that the Hackney Carriage proprietors had formally requested a fare increase. He stated that all licensed proprietors had been formally balloted with the three options for fare increases set out in the report and the option to maintain the status quo. He also informed Members that currently, Sevenoaks was 20th nationally in the list of highest taxi fares for a two mile journey, which was the benchmark published in the September issue of Private Hire Monthly. A further increase in fares would move the Council closer to the top of the list.

Members noted that 79% of taxi drivers had not responded to the ballot, which many Members felt indicated that many were satisfied with the current arrangements. However, some Members felt that the maximum fare should be increased in line with proposal two in the report, which had received the largest amount of support in the ballot.

Members voted on whether to increase fares in line with proposal two but the motion was lost. The majority of Members felt that there was not a sufficient mandate for the increase, given that only 21% of taxi drivers had responded to the ballot and less than half of those who did respond favoured proposal two.

Resolved: That the status quo be maintained with regard to Hackney Carriage Fares.

21. STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

The Assistant Licensing Partnership Manager informed Members that the policy needed to be revisited every three years. There had not been many changes made to the existing policy, which had generally worked well, although some changes had been made to reflect new legislative changes.

The Policy had been the subject of public consultation and four responses had been received. Members agreed the approaches set out in Appendix A to the report. In particular, Members agreed to add within the section on pre-application discussions "You may also wish to consult with the Parish or Town Council whose local knowledge may be beneficial."

Resolved: Council be recommended to approve the Statement of Licensing Policy, including the amendments identified in Appendix A.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 6:46 P.M.

Chairman