

GENERAL PURPOSES LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday 27 January 2015

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Clarkson (Chair), Cook, Coulter, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Royce, Lygo and Wolff.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Julian Alison (Licensing Team Leader), Jill Cramer (Senior Licensing Officer), Lesley Rennie (Business Regulation Team Manager), Samantha Howell (Licensing Officer), Daniel Smith (Law and Governance) and Sarah Claridge (Committee Services Officer)

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Kennedy and Cllr Gant

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

12. TAXI LICENSING ACTIVITY REPORT - APR - DEC 2014

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the progress made by the Taxi Licensing function between 1 April 2014 and 31 December 2014

The Licensing Team Leader presented the report. He explained that the level of activity was similar to last year. The approximate number of licensed taxi and private hire drivers and vehicles in Oxford is as follows;

900 Private Hire drivers, 350 Hackney Carriage drivers
600 Private Hire vehicles, 107 Hackney Carriages vehicles

The following comments were raised:

- As well as the informative page about safeguarding advice in the driver application pack, questions relating to safeguarding are asked in the local knowledge test taken by hackney and private hire drivers.
- Approximately 350-400 non-Oxford Hackney Carriages are working legally in the city. The City has no power to enforce drivers or vehicles licensed by other authorities. We can only prosecute them if they are "plying for hire" as they cannot ply for hire save for in the district within which they are licensed as Hackney Carriage. Officers regularly talk with neighbouring authorities and share relevant information.
- If we want to control the taxi standard in the city we need to encourage other authorities to raise their standards, or review ways in which we can maintain control of our fleets and be attractive to the Private Hire remaining with us. If they become Hackney Carriage elsewhere we lose control over them.

- The draft Taxi and Private Hire Bill written by The Law Commission would have address these variances in standards, however this appears to have been put on indefinite hold and therefore we must seek our own solutions to protect our standing and reputation.
- Taxi drivers are required to undertake a Class II Medical Assessment every 6 years up to the age of 65, and annually thereafter. However these can occur more frequently if evidence suggest so on a case by case basis.
- We could review the reasons for why drivers chose to seek a Hackney Carriage licence elsewhere and then work in Oxford as private hire. Discussions with the main operators suggest the lack of vehicle age limits, the ability to not require council livery on vehicles, the allowance of Black MPV's as licensed vehicles elsewhere, and the discounted licence fees available to "green" vehicles are deemed to be the main contributing factors for neighbouring authorities to be more attractive to obtain a licence.

The Committee resolved to NOTE the content of the report.

13. FEES AND CHARGES 2015/16: GENERAL LICENSING

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought agreement for the general licencing fees for 2015/16

The Licensing Team Leader presented the report. He explained that where the Council has discretion over the level of fee charged, fees had increased by 1.9% in line with inflation.

The Committee resolved to AGREE the general licencing fees and charges for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix 1.

14. FEES AND CHARGES 2015/16: MISCELLANEOUS LICENSING

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought agreement for the miscellaneous licencing fees and charges for 2015/16

The Business Regulations Team Manager presented the report. She explained that where the Council has discretion over the level of fee charged, fees had increased by 1.9% in line with inflation.

The Committee resolved to AGREE the miscellaneous licencing fees and charges for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix 1.

15. REVIEW OF THE STREET TRADING POLICY AND POLICY CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which detailed the responses to the public consultation on the draft Street Trading Policy.

The Licensing Officer presented the report. She explained that 58 responses to the consultation had been received, most in favour of the proposed policy. It was explained that farmer markets would not be included in the fees.

Martin Kersh on behalf of Foodservice Packaging Association spoke against the proposal to make all packaging either biodegradable or recyclable. He explained that the focus should be on changing people's behaviour (so they do not litter) rather than replacing one type of packaging with another.

The following comments were raised:

- The change to biodegradable or recyclable packaging proposed is to enable more waste to be recycled, not to change litter behaviour. The wording in the policy is sufficiently flexible to allow traders to determine which packaging is best for them.
- A guidance note on what packaging can be recycled by different waste collector to be created by licensing officers and circulated to street traders.
- The Committee felt 100 metres was sufficient distance to require traders to be away from any school. This restriction does not apply to higher education establishments.
- A Level 2 food hygiene certificate is high enough to prepare food safely. Food hygiene standards are the same for street traders and premises.
- There is no need to require traders to provide healthy options in the policy as street trader already offer a wide range of healthy eating options in the city.
- The Broad Street protocol covers events on Broad Street. Licensing officers already consider it when relevant applications are received, so there is no need for it to be specifically mentioned in the Street Trading Policy.
- 5.6(2) will be re-worded by officers to make it clearer.
- The City Council cannot regulate A-Boards in the policy as they are a highways issue. It is best to consider them case by case

The Committee resolved to APPROVE the draft Street Trading Policy 2015 and recommend it to Council for adoption.

16. MINUTES

Minute 7 change the Head of City Development to Head of Environmental Development

The Committee resolved to AGREE the amended minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2014 as a true and accurate record

17. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the next meeting would be held on 19 May 2015.

The meeting started at 6.15 pm and ended at 7.35 pm

