

GENERAL PURPOSES LICENSING COMMITTEE

Wednesday 17 October 2012

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Cook (Chair), Canning, Clarkson, Goddard, Lygo, O'Hara and Williams.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Julian Alison (Licensing Team Leader), Jill Cramer (Environmental Development), Daniel Smith (Law and Governance) and Lois Stock (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer)

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were received from Councillors Coulter, Gotch and Royce.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

18. UPDATE ON TAXI LICENSING ACTIVITY APRIL 20112 - AUGUST 2012

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning taxi licensing activity between April 2012 and August 2012.

Julian Alison (Licensing Team Leader) presented the report to the Committee. He explained that the taxi licensing policy was more rigorous than it used to be, particularly on plying for hire, as a result of which more cases were coming before the Hackney Carriages Sub Committee. The licensing team sought to educate taxi drivers on the rules and regulations, but education could only have a limited effect if taxi operators had no care for their drivers, and allowed poor practices to take place. This was regrettable, but there was only a certain amount that licensing officers could do, given the staffing and resources available to them. Licensing's main concern was public safety, and although no-one wished to see drivers lose their licence, that was the risk they took if they failed to follow the guidance available to them.

Anyone having any concerns about the activities of taxi firms or individual drivers should contact the Licensing Team.

Resolved to note the report.

19. REQUEST TO LICENCE ELECTRICALLY ASSISTED PASSENGER CARRYING PEDICABS IN THE CITY

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning a request to licence electrically assistaed

passenger carrying Pedicabs in the City. Julian Alison introduced this report to the Committee.

RESOLVED to await further guidance from the Law Commission before considering this further.

20. HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF - APPLICATION FOR INCREASE

The Head of Environmental development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning a request from the City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association (COLTA) for an increase in the Hackney Carriage Tariff. Jill Cramer (Licensing Officer) introduced the report to the Committee.

The Committee welcomed Khalid Shariff (COLTA) to the meeting. Mr Shariff spoke in favour of the proposed increase.

The Committee felt that it wished to understand more clearly what the effect of any increase would be on the fare-paying passenger. Whilst appreciating that taxi drivers were under pressure, members of the Committee felt that everyone was feeling financial pressure at present, and that too large an increase in the tariff would not be acceptable. The proposal before it seemed to be for a 10% increase, which did not find favour with the Committee. A lower percentage increase, however, might be acceptable.

Resolved to:-

- (1) Defer any decision until the next meeting (February 2013);
- (2) Ask licensing officers to bring a report to the next meeting that showed in more detail the effect of an increase in the Hackney carriage tariff from 5% up to 10%, in order that members may make an informed decision on the likely effect of any increase.

21. TAXI LICENSING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning the results of the Taxi Licensing Satisfaction Survey. Julian Alison presented this report to the Committee, reporting that 86% of respondents were happy with the service they received.

The Chair, Councillor Cook, observed that this was good news for the Council.

Resolved to:-

- (1) Note the report;
- (2) Thank licensing officers for all their hard work;
- (3) Formally thank Tony Payne (who has now left the Council's employment) for all his hard work over the years.

22. MINUTES

Resolved to note as a correct record the minutes of 28th May 2012, with the following amendment:-

The Committee reviewed the draft minute of its decision of 28.05.12 in respect of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles - Review of Euro Emission Standard Level and Vehicle Age Limits and clarified that:-

- 1) The decision made on 15.06.2009 was suspended in its entirety;
- 2) The Committee requested that a consultation be carried out seeking the views of all licence holders as to the following criteria:-

New Vehicle Licences:

- a) **From 1st January 2014, any vehicle must not be older than 5 years of age at the date of the grant of the vehicle licence.**

Renewal of existing Vehicle Licences:

- b) **From 1st January 2014, no vehicle shall be re-licensed if it has reached 8 years of age from the date of first registration.**

The results of this consultation shall be reported back to the Committee at a later date.

3) The Committee requested that a letter be sent as soon as possible to all licence holders informing them that the criteria set in 2009 and due to come into effect from 01.01.13 had been suspended and detailing the age criteria that shall be in effect until 31st December 2013, and that a letter seeking their views as to future vehicle age criteria will be issued in due course, whilst acknowledging that the Council was also awaiting the outcome of the Law Commission reforms of Taxi and Private Hire services;

4) That officers were asked to amend the current Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicle Application Pack and web content in relation to the age limit criteria for vehicles to read:-

- a) **No vehicle will be first licensed unless it is less than five years of age from the date of first registration;**
- b) **All vehicles currently licensed shall be permitted to be re-licensed until 31st December 2013 irrespective of their age, whilst the Council consider the introduction of an upper age limit for all licensed vehicles or as directed by the introduction of National Standards as proposed by the Law Commission in its "reform of Taxi and Private Hire services".**

23. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved to note that the date of the next meeting was 19th February 2013.

The meeting started at 5.55 pm and ended at 7.12 pm