

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Friday, 2 October 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Sargeant (Chair); Councillor Hill (Deputy Chair); Councillors Ansell, Caswell, Choudary, Culbard, Eales, Malpas and Walker

APOLOGIES:

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Duffy.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15th September 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Steve Ward addressed the Committee on behalf of Private Hire Drivers and spoke against the report.

Mr Kevin Wiltshire addressed the Committee as the Chairman of Northampton Town Private Hire Association and spoke against the report.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

None.

6. REVIEW OF HACKNEY AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER FEES

The Senior Licensing Officer presented the report as set out in the agenda. The report is concerned with the consideration of a revised fee structure for the Taxi and Private Hire Drivers' Licences due to the implementation of the Deregulation Act 2015 that will amend the duration of licences. The Senior Licensing Officer states that the current fee structure must be revised in order to take into consideration that driver licences must now be issued for the statutory three year period unless in circumstances of an individual case. The report recommended that a new fee structure was approved with immediate effect. It was reported that a cost exercise had been undertaken in order to ascertain the level of fee that should be set for a New/Renewal application for Private Hire/Hackney/Combined Drivers Licence. The exercise had been carried out using a toolkit recommended by the institute of Licensing for the calculation of licensing fees. The report noted that there was a minimal difference in the functions for a one year Licence and a three year Licence and therefore proposed fee remains the same for licences of both fee durations. The proposed fee structure is detailed in Appendix A of the report.

In response to questions asked by the Committee the Senior Licensing Officer stated that this was the first year the Toolkit had been used which included the addition of the deficit. She noted that in 3 years this could start to realign reducing the deficit over a 3 year period and we will continue to monitor the income/expenditure.

In response to further questions by the Committee regarding payments the Senior Licensing Officer advised that the annual invoicing/billing would result in a requirement for more staff and therefore passing the excess cost to the trade.

Mr Steve Ward addressed the Committee as a representative of Private Hire Drivers and spoke against the proposal. He stated that inflation of Licensing fees was unnecessary as Drivers pay for medical and DBS. He noted that a new Drivers Licence from the DVLA for 10 years cost less than a Private Hire Driver's Licence. He recommended lower charges to reflect worked involved by Licensing Officers and that all Drivers join the update service.

Mr Kevin Wiltshire addressed the Committee as the Chairman of Northampton town Private Hire Association. He recommended that the proposed 3 year Licensing fee equate to the existing 1 year Licensing fee. He also stated that no consultation occurred with the Private Hire Association regarding the fee restructure and advised that there was no inclusion of the revenue brought in from Hackney carriages and vehicle operator licences. In response to questions from the Committee Mr Wiltshire stated that it would be unfair to charge the same fee for a 1 year Licence as a 3 year Licence. He also noted it was not logical under the proposed circumstances to request a 1 year licence. Mr Wiltshire stated that Northampton Borough Council would be receiving full charges along with the benefit of reducing staff while giving nothing to the trade.

The Chair requested that Mr Ward and Mr Wiltshire leave the room while the Committee deliberate.

7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the Public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was Carried.

8. REVIEW OF HACKNEY AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER FEES

The Senior Licensing Solicitor advised the Committee that legislation states that a fee for a 1 year licence must be in place. Members of the Committee questioned if an amended recommendation be approved which would be to apply 20% discount rate on 1 year licences. Upon a vote the members voted against the recommendation.

The Committee discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

That a new fee structure is approved with immediate effect.

<TRAILER_SECTION>

The meeting concluded at 11:03 am

Signature_____

Date_____