

Taxi Licensing Committee

Thursday 21 January 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor Derrick, in the Chair.

Councillor Tuffin, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Mrs Bridgeman, Corvid (substitute for Councillor Rennie), Mrs Pengelly and Riley.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Rennie.

Also in attendance: Ann Gillbanks (Senior Lawyer), Rachael Hind (Service Manager – Intelligence and Licensing), Helen Foote (Finance Business Partner), Andrea Gilbert (Lawyer), Steve Forshaw (Senior Enforcement Officer) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.20 am.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

46. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct.

47. Minutes

The committee agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 10 December 2020, and 17 December 2020 are confirmed as a correct record.

48. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

49. Appeal Cases

There were no updates on appeal cases.

50. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licence Fees

Rachael Hind (Licensing Service Manager) presented the report on the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licence Fees and highlighted the following key areas:

- the recommendation included in the report was to not increase any of the Taxi Licensing fees for 2021/22 – having reviewed the accounts it was considered that the only fees to increase could be the Hackney Carriage

Drivers Licence Fee however due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, it was proposed that a further year was allocated to balance the accounts by 2024/25 to assist the trade during this time and prevent unnecessary hardship to drivers;

- Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the trade and was factored into future budget monitoring – these figures were being reviewed on a regular basis. Whilst the number of licences had dropped by approximately 8% for the Hackney Carriage trade (7% vehicles, and 9% drivers) and 11% for Private Hire (12% vehicle, 8% driver), there were a number of drivers who had a three year driving licence and the impact of Covid-19 may mean that drivers have found alternative work and may not renew their licences;
- on reviewing the administration time spent on the two trades, it was proposed that the split for this year would be 31% to Hackney Carriage and 69% to Private Hire;
- enforcement officer actions in the last financial year had been reviewed, and based on last year's workloads, more time was spent on Private Hire than Hackney Carriage with a split of 60% to Private Hire and 40% to Hackney Carriage; this would vary each year and would be reviewed annually;
- as detailed in section 7 of the report, a number of savings had been made:
 - the third Taxi Enforcement Officer, who left at end of November 2019, had not been replaced;
 - one of the Technical Support Officers reduced to part time hours in April 2020 and the remaining part of the post had not been filled for 9 months;
 - two officers worked in another department for several months as a result of COVID-19; another officer worked at another site for 3 weeks;
 - the legal costs had been significantly reduced during this period;
 - the trade accounts have not been charged for any time that Officers worked in other departments and all of this has been reflected in the forecast for the taxi accounts.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to:

- figures associated with direct debit costs and approximately how much that would equate to per application;
- the importance of consulting with the taxi trade;
- further details regarding staff savings in the report and clarification as to why the balancing of the account was being deferred until 2024/25 if savings were being made. It was noted that this date would be reviewed regularly.

The Committee agreed:

1. that there will be no increase in fees for 2021/22; and as a consequence:
2. the Hackney Carriage Accounts will now be brought into balance by the end of the financial year 2024/25.

51. **Exempt Information**

Agreed that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 to exclude the press and the public from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

52. **Confidential Minutes**

The Committee agreed that the confidential minutes of the meetings held on 10 December 2020 and 17 December 2020 are confirmed as a correct record.

53. **Application for the Grant of a Private Hire Vehicle Driver Licence**

The Committee:

- (a) considered the report from the Director for Public Health;
- (b) heard from the taxi driver;
- (c) took the following into account:
 - all facts, law and policy referred to in the report;
 - all that was said by the taxi driver.

The Committee agreed, having considered the report on its own merits, that the taxi driver's application for a private hire driver's licence is granted. The driver is required to satisfactorily complete the NVQ/VRQ or equivalent qualification in "Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire", and the Plymouth Ambassador Course within 12 months of the licence being granted in accordance with the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

(Please note: there is a confidential part to this minute)

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