

LICENSING COMMITTEE

1.00 P.M.

14TH MARCH 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Sally Maddocks (Chair), Gerry Blaikie, Martin Bottoms, Phil Bradley, Claire Cozler, Erin Hall and Tim Hamilton-Cox

Apologies for Absence

Councillors Margaret Pattison (Vice-Chair), Andrew Gardiner and Paul Tynan

Officers in attendance:

Jennifer Curtis	Licensing Manager
Daniel Spencer	Lawyer
Sarah Moorghen	Democratic Support Officer

41 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 4th January 2024 and 1st February 2024 were signed as correct records.

42 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44 REVIEW OF LICENSING FEES FOR ANIMAL-RELATED LICENSING

The Community Health & Animal Welfare Manager presented a report which reviewed the costs and licensing fees for animal-related licensing and requested Members to approve the level of fees for 2024/25.

The Council's Fees & Charges Policy stated that when setting charges, the general aim was to cover the cost of the service, accurately reflecting the full cost of provision including recharges.

It was reported that on 28th February 2024 Council approved the fees and charges policy and proposed inflationary uplift which had formed the basis of the 2024/25 draft revenue budget. Where appropriate, the inflationary uplift increase to consider was 10%.

The Committee was advised that after consultation with the Principal Accountant an agreed amount of 10% on each fee was being proposed.

Members considered the timeline for fee setting and suggested the setting of fees be considered by Licensing Committee in November to better fit in with the Council's Budget Process.

Members asked a number of questions relating to the specific figures for costs and income for animal licensing and agreed to defer the item to the end of the meeting for further information to be obtained (Minute 48 refers).

45 PROPOSED LICENSING FEES 2024/25

The Licensing Manager presented a report which provided detailed budget information for the Licensing Service and set out the proposed fee levels to enable Members to consider setting fees, for a variety of different licences for 2024/25.

The Committee was advised that the setting of fees was a non-executive function and therefore a matter for the Committee to consider.

It was reported that the Council's Fees & Charges Policy stated that when setting discretionary charges, the general aim was to cover the cost of the service, accurately reflecting the full cost of the provision including recharges. However, fees must be reasonable and proportionate.

The Committee was advised that it was a requirement of the Council's Fees & Charges Policy that fees be reviewed annually to ensure that costs were appropriately recovered. It was not lawful however, for the Council to seek to make a profit from licence fees that fall within its discretion.

A full and detailed review of Licensing fees and charges was undertaken in 2023. Prior to this the last full review was completed in 2019; fees were frozen after this in response to the Coronavirus pandemic and to support business recovery.

It was reported that at a meeting of the Licensing Committee in March 2023, members had resolved the following in respect of Licence fees and charges (relating to taxi/private hire and miscellaneous licences only).

"That fees increase, not by the recommended amount, but by 20% (to the nearest pound) now; and to affect a further increase in the following year with a view to achieving full cost recovery in 24/25, accepting that the fee increases may again be above inflation. The reason for the two-stage increase is to smooth the impact on the trade"

The Committee was advised that the Licensing Function was currently running at a deficit of circa £80K pa over the period 2020/2021 to 2022/2023. A thorough cost exercise had been undertaken on taxi licensing and miscellaneous licensing with a view to returning to full cost recovery where possible.

The Committee was asked to consider the following options;

- a. To maintain current fees and charges.
- b. Increase fees by 10%, consistent with other fees and charges of the Council.
- c. Increase fees by 20% as recommended by the Service accountant.

The Committee asked a number of questions relating to consultation with the trade and the budgeting figures. Members felt that more detail was needed regarding the current budgeting position before a decision on increasing the fees could be made.

It was proposed by Councillor Bradley and seconded by Councillor Bottoms;

“That the matter be deferred, to a meeting to be arranged, prior to the next scheduled meeting in June 2024”

A vote was taken and unanimously carried.

Resolved;

That the matter be deferred, to a meeting to be arranged, prior to the next scheduled meeting in June 2024.

46 ANNUAL REPORT - LICENSING SERVICE

The Licensing Manager presented the annual report on private hire/hackney carriage related matters, including volume of applications, complaints, and enforcement activity.

Members asked a number of questions regarding the content of the annual report relating to complaints and warning letters and the new driver figures. Members also asked questions regarding the licensing in Wolverhampton and the Licensing Manager agreed to ask Wolverhampton City Council how many licences application they had received from residential addresses in the Lancaster district.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

47 PROPOSED LICENSING WORKPLAN 2024

The Licensing Manager presented a report which sought approval of the proposed Licensing Work Plan for 2024.

The proposed work plan was appended to the report for the Committee's consideration.

Members asked a number of questions on the work plan in particularly regarding enforcement, and requested a briefing note on temporary licensing which the Licensing Manager advised could be provided later in the year.

The Committee thanked the Licensing Manager for a very good work programme.

Resolved:

That the Work Programme for 2024 be approved.

48 DEFERRED ITEM - REVIEW OF LICENSING FEES FOR ANIMAL-RELATED LICENSING

Further to Minute 44 the Community Health & Welfare Manager provided further information requested by the Committee. The Committee was advised that the

anticipated revenue was £8400 and the actual revenue cost was £9265 for 2023/24 which was cost neutral.

It was proposed by Councillor Hamilton-Cox and seconded by Councillor Phil Bradley;

“That the licensing fees for animal licensing be increased by 10%”

A vote was taken and unanimously agreed.

Resolved;

“That the licensing fees for animal licensing be increased by 10%”

Chair

(The meeting ended at 2.20 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Sarah Moorghen, Democratic Support - email smoorghen@lancaster.gov.uk**