

LICENSING COMMITTEE

1.00 P.M.

3RD OCTOBER 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Sally Maddocks (Chair), Margaret Pattison (Vice-Chair), Gerry Blaikie, Martin Bottoms, Andrew Gardiner, John Hanson and Paul Tynan

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Maria Deery

Officers in attendance:

Jennifer Curtis	Licensing Manager
Rephael Walmsley	Senior Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Sarah Jones	Licensing Officer (Minutes 25-28 only)
Sarah Moorghen	Democratic Support Officer

25 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th September 2024 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

26 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28 LICENSING ACT 2003 - PREMISES REPORT

The Licensing Officer presented a report which provided an overview of the Licensing Services activities relating to premises licences under the Licensing Act 2003.

Members were advised that the Licensing Service dealt with a variety of applications within the Licensing Act 2003 many of which were dealt with by Officers under delegated powers.

The Committee was advised that there were currently 602 active premise licences and 28 Club Premises Certificates within the district. Between 1st August 2022 and 31st August 2024 a total of 943 applications for different types of licences had been administered.

Members were advised on the Licensing Service's inspection activities and how Licensing Officers had built positive relationships with the Police Licensing Team, Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Immigration. A number of inspections had been carried out with a multi-agency approach.

It was reported that in the coming year Licensing Officers intended to focus on targeting inspections on late night refreshment premises (takeaways).

The Committee was also provided with a summary of complaints and advised that there had been a total of 35 complaints reported to the Licensing Team between 1st August 2022 and 31st August 2024.

It was reported that the new Statement of Licensing Policy 2023-2027 was endorsed by Full Council on 24th April 2024 and was appended to the agenda for the Committee's consideration.

Members were informed that during the last 24 months there had been 5 Licensing Sub-Committee hearings. To date there had been no appeals instigated following decisions taken by Members of Sub-Committees during the last two years.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the administration of licenses and enforcement procedures.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

29 FIT FOR THE FUTURE - DIGITALISATION UPDATE

The Licensing Manager introduced a report which updated Members on the progress made in the Fit for Future – Digitalisation project.

Members were advised that the Council had introduced a programme of 'outcome-based resourcing' (OBR) and that an external contractor (People 2) had been appointed to carry out service base digitalisation opportunity assessments. Licensing had been highlighted as an area for development.

The Committee was advised that People 2 had been provided with an overview of key matters affecting the Licensing Service including out of date work practices, lengthy paper-based applications and "clunky" processes. Following several discussion/sessions between People 2 and the Licensing Manager a set of 14 recommendations had been produced.

A copy of the 14 recommendations was appended to the report for the Committee's consideration.

It was reported that several of the recommendations had been identified as "quick wins" and had already been implemented. Additionally, action had been taken on the majority of the recommendations, including engagement with support services and external meetings/discussions.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the digitalisation project, timescales and cost savings. Members noted that there was currently a vacant position within the Licensing Team and were advised that this could represent a cost saving opportunity.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

- (2) That the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, write to the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member with particular responsibility for Finance and Resourcing and ask that they reconsider filling the current vacant post, possibly temporarily, while the digitalisation process is ongoing.

30 HACKNEY CARRIAGE ROOF-SIGNS - REVIEW OF POLICY DECISION

The Licensing Manager provided a report which requested that Members review the policy requirements regarding Hackney Carriage roof-signs.

It was reported that as part of the Private Hire and Hackney Carriages Licensing Policy in April 2022 the Committee had wished to create a sense of uniformity across the fleet and had agreed to a mandatory requirement for all Hackney Carriages to display a standardised, Council-issued roof-sign.

The Committee was advised that members of the trade had expressed dissatisfaction with the chosen sign and the associated uplift in the annual vehicle fee. Furthermore, a local roof-sign fitter had refused to fit the signs. In light of this the Licensing Committee had paused the implementation of the policy for 12 months and due to other service priorities and workloads it had taken a further 12 months for the matter to be reconsidered.

It was reported that the Taxi and Private Hire Liaison Group had met on the 19th September 2024 to discuss the policy position and implementation of the standardised roof-signs. It was reported that the Group supported the roof-signs as an option for those who wish to have one, but not imposed as a mandatory requirement.

The Committee was advised that the cost of the roof-signs had been recovered through the vehicle licence fees at the cost of £30 per year over 3 years. It was noted that a reversal in the policy could not result in any part of the fees being refundable but could be reflected in future Hackney Carriage licence fees.

Members discussed the options and it was then proposed by Councillor Gardiner and seconded by Councillor Bottoms:

“That the roof signs be made optional and available from the Council should any members of the Trade wish to use one”

Councillor Maddocks then proposed a friendly amendment, by way of an addendum, which Councillor Gardiner and Councillor Bottoms, as the proposer and seconder of the original motion, accepted:

“That any adjustments in fees will be assessed via the fee review and budget process for 2025/6”.

A vote was taken and unanimously agreed:

Resolved:

- (1) That the roof signs be made optional and available from the Council should any members of the Trade wish to use one.

- (2) That any adjustments in fees will be assessed via the fee review and budget process for 2025/26.

31 CHAPEL STREET ILLEGAL PARKING UPDATE

The Licensing Manager presented a briefing note on the illegal parking on Chapel Street, Lancaster. The briefing note was appended to the agenda for Councillors consideration.

Members of the Committee discussed the issue and Councillor Gardiner added that he would write to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at Lancashire County Council and request that their Enforcement Teams target this area.

Resolved:

That the briefing note be noted.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 2.15 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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