

LICENSING COMMITTEE

1.00 P.M.

11TH APRIL 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Sally Maddocks (Chair), Margaret Pattison (Vice-Chair), Gerry Blaikie, Martin Bottoms, Phil Bradley, Andrew Gardiner, Tim Hamilton-Cox and Paul Tynan

Apologies for Absence

Councillors Erin Hall

Officers in attendance:

Jennifer Curtis	Licensing Manager
Daniel Spencer	Lawyer
Andrew Kipling	Principal Accountant
Malcolm Hetherington	Assistant Accountant
Sarah Moorghen	Democratic Support Officer

49 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2024 were signed as a correct record.

50 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of Urgent Business.

51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

52 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.

It was noted that the item had been deferred from the meeting of the 14th March 2024 to allow the Principal Accountant to attend the meeting to provide advice to the Committee.

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 budgetary information provided by the service accountant had not taken the 2023 resolution into account, so any proposed increase to fees and charges would be based on the current 2023 fees as a baseline.

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.

It was proposed by Councillor Gardiner and seconded by Councillor Bottoms:

- “(1) That fees be increased by 10%, consistent with other fees and chargers of the Council.
- (2) That the Licensing Manager be instructed to advertise the fees as part of the statutory consultation.”

Councillor Maddocks 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:

- “(3) That the Licensing Committee be involved in the fee setting process prior to November 2024.”

Upon being put to the vote, 7 Councillors voted in favour, and 1 against, whereupon the Chair declared the proposal to have been carried.

Resolved:

- (1) That fees be increased by 10%, consistent with other fees and chargers of the Council.
- (2) That the Licensing Manager be instructed to advertise the fees as part of the statutory consultation.
- (3) That the Licensing Committee be involved in the fee setting process prior to November.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 1.40 p.m.)

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