

LICENSING COMMITTEE
10TH OCTOBER 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Monday, 10th October 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor Tony Sharps (Chairman)

Councillors: Glyn Banks, David Cox, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Mike Lowe, Ralph Small, Martin White and Andy Williams.

APOLOGY:

Councillor Adele Davies-Cooke.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Community and Business Protection Manager, Licensing Team Leader, Solicitor and Team Leader - Democratic Services.

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Cox was moved and seconded as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Cox be appointed Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee for 2019/20.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andy Williams declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item number 5 – Hackney Carriage Fare Increase as he was a Director of a private hire company.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2019 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE INCREASE

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the report which requested consideration of a request made by the Hackney Carriage trade to increase the maximum chargeable fares payable by the public for Hackney Carriage journeys.

Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provided that a district council could fix the maximum rates of fares within the Borough, and all other charges in connection with the hire of a Hackney Carriage vehicle. This was done by means of a table of fares. Private Hire vehicles were able to set their own fares and were therefore not the subject of the report.

The Licensing Section had received a request from the Manager at a Private Hire Operator firm which used a Hackney Carriage vehicle within its fleet. The request cited the cost of living, and rising fuel and insurance costs as the reason for the review. The current fares were last approved in 2008 and were appended to the report.

A monthly table was published by Private Hire and Taxi Monthly magazine and Flintshire was listed at 334 out of 362, with 362 being the lowest. Proposed fees for consideration were also appended to the report.

Licensed Hackney Carriages must be equipped with a taxi meter which must be calibrated to the maximum fares and charges approved by the Council. Drivers could charge less if they wished but it was an offence to exceed the approved scale of fares. The proposed fares would bring Flintshire in line with the agreed fares in Gwynedd. There were currently only four licensed Hackney Carriage vehicles within Flintshire.

Details of the variation to the table of fares would be published in at least one local newspaper, setting out the table of fares or the variation thereof, and specifying the period which would not be less than 14 days from the date of first publication of the notice within which objections to the table of fares or variation could be made. If no objections were made within the period specified in the notice, or if all objections made were withdrawn, the table of fares or variations would come into operation. If an objection was made, the Council would set a further date, not more than two months after the specified date on which the table of fares should come into force, with or without modifications, as decided by them after consideration of the objections.

Councillor Banks asked if operators were encouraged to use electric vehicles, and suggested that incentives could be given if they did. The Licensing Team Leader explained that Flintshire did not currently have many charging points for electric vehicles, and explained the difficulties a taxi driver could face as the charge did not last as long as fuel.

Having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillor Williams did not take part in the debate or vote.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the increase to the Hackney Carriage fares, for implementation on 1st January 2020 and following consultation, be approved; and
- (b) That if any objections were received following the publication of a public notice, delegated authority be given to the Licensing Sub-Committee for it to consider any such objections.

5. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR PRIVATE HIRE/HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVERS

Members were advised on the Safeguarding Training for Private Hire Operators, and Private Hire/Hackney Carriage Drivers, following approval by the Licensing Committee in October 2017.

Six sessions, run by the NSPCC, had been arranged to take place throughout October 2019 and were detailed in the report.

To date, 373 drivers and operators had booked onto the training. For those drivers not taking advantage of the free sessions offered, attendance on a safeguarding training could be chargeable in the future. Any refusal would result in the licence holder being brought before a Licensing Sub-Committee to ascertain whether they remained fit and proper to remain a licensed driver or operator.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

6. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public present.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 10.16am)

.....
Chairman