

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

1 MARCH 2016

PRESENT – Councillor Nutt (in the Chair); Councillors L Haszeldine, B. Jones, Kane, Lawton, Lee, Newall and Stenson (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillors D. Jones and C. Hughes. (2)

OFFICERS – Pam Ross, Licensing, Car Parks, Trading Standards and CCTV Manager; Julie Richings, Principal Licensing Officer; Amy Wennington, Lawyer; and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

L13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

L14. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Committee held on 15 December, 2015.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

L15. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 27 October 2015.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

L16. PROPOSED CHANGES TO TAXI LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2016-2017 – Pursuant to Minute L12/Dec/15, The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) to invite Members to approve proposed changes in the fees and charges relating to the licensing of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, their drivers and operators. The proposed fees have been based on the actual cost of administering and where appropriate enforcing the relevant legislation pertaining to such licence.

It was reported that Members initially considered a report on 15 December, 2015 (Minute L12/Dec/15 refers) on the proposed fees and charges prior to its consideration by Cabinet and final approval by Council. On 16 December 2015 the proposed fees were advertised in the Northern Echo allowing for any objections to be received and forwarded to Council on 13 January 2016.

To allow for greater flexibility for setting of fees and charges and enable in depth consideration to be given by Members in a specialist Committee, Full Council at its meeting on 28 January 2016 approved the delegation of the setting of fees and registrations within the remit of the General Licensing Committee to that Committee and the Council's Constitution was duly amended.

The submitted report detailed the responses to the initial consultation from the trade on 21 December 2015, including a letter received from one of the vehicle proprietor drivers, Mr. Leighton, who attended the meeting and officers responses to the issues

raised by Mr. Wilson of A to Z Licensing, representing Members of the Taxi Trade through a newly formed Darlington Taxi Association.

The submitted report also clarified the position regarding the process for recording officer time, issues in respect of surpluses and deficits, and issues in respect of separate accounting for hackney carriage and private hire licensing.

Due to trade representation that the setting of fees was ultra vires, for the avoidance of any doubt, Officers agreed to restart the process of inviting the General Licensing Committee to again support the proposals for the revised fees for 2016/17.

The proposed fees in respect of the taxi licensing service were detailed in the submitted report and it was outlined that these fees were higher than those originally approved by Members in December 2015 as a result of further checks of calculations for each licence which revealed that the original figures had failed to take into account Officer 'down time'.

It was reported that following the further period of consultation any objections received will be referred back to Members of this General Licensing Committee at their meeting scheduled for 19 April 2016.

RESOLVED – (a) That Members of the General Licensing Committee approve the proposed fees relating to hackney carriage vehicle and driver licences, private hire vehicle and driver licences and private hire operator licences as detailed in Appendix B to the submitted report.

(b) That Members approve the increase from £30 to £35 for the cost of the knowledge test.

(c) That Members approve the commencement of the consultation period by way of advertisement of the fees in the Northern Echo of all licences detailed in the submitted report.