

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

19 APRIL 2016

PRESENT – Councillor Nutt (in the Chair); Councillors, B. Jones, Mrs Jones, Kane, Lawton, and Stenson (6)

APOLOGIES – Councillors L. Haszeldine, C. Hughes, Lee and Newall. (4)

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

L17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

L18. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Committee held on 1 March 2016.

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

L19. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 1 March 2016.

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

L20. PROPOSED CHANGES TO TAXI LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2016-2017 – Further to Minute L16/Mar/16, The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) to invite Members to give consideration to the objections received from Members of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade following the advertisement of the proposed changes in the fees and changes in the fees and charges relating to the licensing of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, their drivers and operators.

It was reported that Members considered a report on 1 March 2016 (Minute L16/Mar/16 refers) on the proposed fees and charges in respect of hackney carriage and private hire drivers and vehicles and also private hire operators. Members approved the proposed fees and these were duly advertised in the Northern Echo on 4 March 2016, with a requirement for objections to be received in writing no later than 1 April 2016.

It was also reported that letters detailing the proposed increases were sent to every vehicle proprietor and private hire operator with a request that they be passed to their drivers. As a result four objections have been received in respect of the proposed increases, two from drivers and one from a Private Hire Operator and one from A-Z Licensing on behalf of 26 trade members and these were detailed in the submitted report including officer responses to the objections.

Mr. Wilson, of A-Z Licensing on behalf of Darlington Taxi Association; and Mr. Mason from 1 AB Taxis attended the meeting and Mr. Wilson outlined his objections and gave his comments on the officer responses to the Committee. Mr. Wilson in general accepted the comments from officers regarding his initial objections but his concerns over the issue of the £55 charge for a vehicle test; the additional/central costs levied on the service; and the officer salaries which he requested further details of. Mr. Mason did have no further comments to add other than in the submitted report and also accepted the officer responses to the Committee.

The Chair advised Mr. Wilson and Mr. Mason that if they or any other Member of the Trade required further information, the Principal Licensing Officer would be able to provide upon request.

– (a) Members approve the proposed fees relating to hackney carriage vehicle and driver licences, private hire vehicle and driver licences and private hire operator licences as contained in the submitted report taking into consideration the objections received.

(b) Members agree the proposed fees are reasonable to meet the costs of the ‘taxi licensing service’ and approve the proposed fees.

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

(NOTE – Councillor D. Jones left the meeting before the decision on L20 above was taken and therefore took no part in the decision thereon)