

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 14 January 2020

PRESENT – Councillors K Nicholson (Chair), Lee, Clarke, Crumbie, Donoghue, Haszeldine, C L B Hughes, B Jones, Newall, A J Scott and Snedker

APOLOGIES – Councillor Dulston

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Amy Wennington (Principal Lawyer (Litigation)), Graham Hall (Head of Community Safety), Colin Dobson (Licensing Manager), Brian Murray (Assistant Licensing Manager) and Allison Hill (Democratic Officer)

LG13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

LG14 MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

Submitted – the Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Committee held on 12 November 2019.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Licensing Committee held on 12 November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

LG15 MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB COMMITTEE

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 12 November 2019.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 12 November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

LG16 REVIEW OF TAXI LICENSING FEES FOR 2020-21

The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) for Members of this General Licensing Committee, under delegation by Full Council, to give consideration to the licence fees relating to hackney carriage and private hire drivers along with their vehicles and operators.

It was reported that the fees are reviewed annually, based on the cost recovery of administering and where appropriate enforcing the relevant legislation relating to such licences.

In respect of taxi licensing, legislation permits the Council to recover all or part of the costs of providing the taxi licensing services, including its administration and control. Surpluses must be carried forward and deficient may be carried forward to future years within each ring-fenced licensing budget.

It was reported that this financial year has seen the embedding of a new licensing team structure following a review of the Community Safety Section in 2018 and the

introduction of processes to scan all taxi licence applications onto a secure database from January 2019 which take additional time; and there has also been an increase in the general work load of Licensing Officers throughout 2019, particularly with the introduction of new Animal Welfare Regulations in October 2018.

It was also reported that Licensing are engaging with IT suppliers to find the most suitable system to allow members of the public to make full applications on-line to the level required by this Licensing Authority.

The submitted report outlined the Local Government Association's guidance on the following activities that can be included in calculating the fee on a cost recovery basis; the review of the taxi licensing fees undertaken for the current financial year which showed the carry forward income for Hackney Carriages was expected to be £20,222 and £19,212 for private hire, giving a total surplus to carry forward of £39,434, a reduction of the surplus for the previous year of £62,373; and the proposed fees for 2020/21 to remain at their current level for Hackney Carriage Vehicles, Private Hire Vehicles, Driver Licence and Operator's Licence.

Members discussed in particular the requirement to reduce the surplus balanced against the need to retain a surplus for future developments; the Local Government Association guidance on what activities can be included in calculating the fee and what is included with this authority; the current situation in Darlington where taxi operators are registered with another authority.

RESOLVED – That this General Licensing Committee approve the taxi licensing fees to continue at their current rate from 1 April 2020.