

## GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17 January 2023

**PRESENT** – Councillors C L B Hughes (Chair), Donoghue, Haszeldine, B Jones, Newall, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott and Snedker

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Clarke, Crumbie and Lee

**ABSENT** – Councillor K Nicholson

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Colin Dobson (Licensing Manager), Amy Wennington (Principal Lawyer (Litigation)), Brian Murray (Assistant Licensing Manager), Anthony Hall (Superintendent Registrar), Allison Hill (Democratic Officer), Michael Conway (Mayoral and Democratic Officer) and PC Alan Newcombe (Durham Constabulary)

### LG24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### LG25 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2022

Submitted – the Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Committee held on 29 November 2022.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Licensing committee held on 29 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

### LG26 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 29 November 2022.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of the General Licensing Sub-Committee held on 29 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

### LG27 APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF LICENCE FOR PREMISES TO BE APPROVED AS A VENUE FOR MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS - DARLINGTON ARENA, NEASHAM ROAD

The Assistant Director, Law and Governance and Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to an application for a licence for Darlington Arena, Neasham Road to be approved as a venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships in accordance with the provisions of The Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994); the Civil Partnership Act (2004); the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 and 2021; and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013).

The submitted report gave a summary of the Darlington Arena as an existing experienced hospitality venue; the proposed designated rooms and maximum capacity for each room for civil marriage and civil partnerships and a plan of the venue including the proposed locations.

**RESOLVED** – That the licence for the Darlington Arena, Neasham Road as an approved premise for civil marriage and civil partnerships be granted for three years from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026 and that the places designated where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place indoors at the premises and the maximum of numbers of persons who can attend those marriage and civil partnerships be:

Location	Maximum Capacity
Executive Lounge (the principal ceremony room)	150
Presidents Suite	250
Platinum Suite	110
Board Room/Directors Room	30 each/60 combined
Concourse Suite	400
Outdoors (Pitch)	The stadium has a maximum capacity of 25,000 people.

Notes:

1. Maximum capacities do not include the couple being married, registrars, photographers/videographers and venue staff.
2. Outdoor marriages/civil partnerships can take place at any location within the boundary of the venue.
3. Where an outdoor structure has been approved for marriages/civil partnerships the maximum number of persons within the approved structure is the couple being married and their witnesses and excludes registrars, photographers/videographers and venue staff. The number of guests located outside of the structure is unlimited and does not form part of the maximum capacity of the structure.

## **LG28 LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2023 - 2024**

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to invite Members to determine the fees relating to licensing.

It was reported that the fees are based on the cost recovery of administering and where appropriate enforcing the relevant legislation relating to such licences; and Councils are responsible for administering a range of licences and for the majority of these regimes the costs are recovered through fees set by each council and paid by the licence applicant.

It was also highlighted that Locally set fees are a vital means of ensuring that full costs can be recovered, reducing the risk of a subsidy from local tax payers, and that businesses do not pay more than they should.

It was reported that this financial year had continued to see unprecedented challenges within the licensing environment following the ongoing recovery from the Covid pandemic and the effects the war in Ukraine has had on the national economy the Taxi provision, which is closely linked to the to the night-time economy had also had to suffer

the impact of a driver shortage following the easing of Covid regulations.

It was also reported that the estimated loss of taxi income due to Covid-19 had been £45,000 and that the funding to support that loss was no longer available.

The report also highlighted other areas affecting licensing including on 1 September 2022 Licensing introduced a new on-line application for taxis with the aim of improving efficiency and satisfaction in processing these applications and early indications were that staff and customers were seeing the benefits of the system and although it was clear that efficiency savings will be made, the income generated will not be as great due the reduction in driver numbers; on the 4 April the Financial Act 2022 introduced a requirement for all taxi and private hire driving licence applications to be accompanied with a code from HMRC to demonstrate that they are registered to pay tax on their earnings as a driver placing an additional administrative requirement on the licensing service; and on 31 March, the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022 received Royal Assent and within that Act there is a requirement for licensing to check a national database (NR3) of licence refusals, suspensions and revocations and to maintain this database with decisions made by this Licensing Authority placing an additional administrative requirement on the licensing department.

It was reported that as part of the ongoing digitisation programme of the licensing department, the on-line appointment system 'Qmatic' was in the process of being integrated into the licensing department for taxis and will be a crucial element in improving service quality and when fully integrated it will be used with other licensing regimes.

The submitted report also provided information on Taxi marshals that were introduced as a direct response to a shortage of drivers servicing the ranks for the night time economy; staffing; taxi licensing fees and general licensing fees; consultation with Highways; Pavement Cafés licences; and detailed the proposed 5 per cent increase on all licence fees from 1 April 2023 compared to the current licence fees.

**RESOLVED** – That approval be given to increase by 5 per cent, all licensing fees across all regimes in line with the predicted Retail Price Index (RPI) for 2023.