

Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 12th March 2014 from 7:00 pm to 7:28 p.m.

Present: Christopher Hersey (Chairman)*
Bruce Forbes (Vice-Chairman) – in the Chair

Mims Davies
David Dorking*
Kathleen Dumbovic
Richard Goddard

Ginny Heard*
Margaret Hersey*
Jacqui Landriani
Bob Mainstone

Gary Marsh*
John O'Brien*
Peter Reed
Mandy Thomas-Atkin
Emily White

* Absent

Also Present: Councillor Jim Knight.

10. SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE – COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 4

The Committee noted that no substitutes had been appointed in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4 – Substitutes at Meetings of Committees etc.

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Dorking, Heard, Chris and Margaret Hersey, O'Brien and Gary Marsh.

12. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Declarations of Interest were made.

13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18th September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. REQUEST FOR INCREASE IN HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES 2014 AND AN ANNUAL TARIFF REVIEW BASED ON A PERCENTAGE FORMULA

The Committee received a report on an increase in Hackney Carriage fares and the principle of introducing a formula for future annual tariff changes.

Alec Lee, the Council's Licensing Officer, explained that a request had been received from the Mid Sussex Taxi Association for an increase in Hackney Carriage fares from 1st April 2014, on the grounds that there had been a general increase in the cost of living, fuel and maintenance costs and the impact of the Private Hire fleet currently working in Mid Sussex.

The Association has also requested that consideration be given to introducing an automatic annual fare change in the future, based on an agreed formula, which will simplify the application process for both the Council and the Taxi Association. They propose that:

- i. the minimum fare (flag) distance be reduced from 338 yards to 330 yards;
- ii. the flag fare be increased by 20p;
- iii. the distance travelled for every 20p be reduced for every 20p from 170 yards to 160 yards; and
- iv. waiting time be retained at 20p for 40 seconds which equates to £18 per hour.

Members supported the request for the increase in hackney carriage fares proposed by the Taxi Association, as they recognised that these are difficult times for the taxi trade. One Member commented that market forces will determine whether the fares are sustainable. The Committee also supported the introduction of a formula for future annual tariff changes.

In response to a question from a Member, the Licensing Officer clarified that the fares and distances are set locally. They are built on over many years and vary from authority to authority.

In response to another question from the Member, he confirmed that he did not have any information available as to the overall percentage increase of fares.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took the Committee to the recommendations.

RESOLVED

That:-

- (1) the Hackney Flag Tariff be increased by 20p on 1st April 2014 with a reduction in yardage by eight yards;
- (2) the distance covered for 20p be reduced from 170 yards to 160 yards; and
- (3) the Taxi Licensing Officer, in conjunction with Mid Sussex Taxi Association, be instructed to develop a mechanism for setting fares in the future and report back to the Committee their proposal for adoption.

15. REVIEW OF LICENCE CONDITIONS FOR TOURING CARAVAN AND CAMP SITES

The Committee received a report on a review of licence conditions for smaller sites with less than 15 units.

Yvonne Leddy, Business Unit Leader for Environmental Health and Building Control, introduced the report and explained that, in 2012, a set of standard licence conditions for Touring Caravan and Campsites was introduced for larger sites within the district. She added that the conditions are considered to be onerous for anything less than 15 units and it is proposed that Officers be given discretion to apply reduced standards for smaller sites.

The Business Unit Leader explained that, in February, permanent planning permission had been granted for a woodland site camp site. The owner had requested that a new licence be granted with the same terms and conditions as previously tailored to his site. She added that licence conditions will be site specific.

In response to a question from a Member, the Business Unit Leader clarified that, if there were any issues with the conditions and a specific site, the Licence would be brought back to this Committee for revocation.

In response to a question from a Member as to how the 15 unit trigger related to our current conditions, the Business Unit Leader explained that this was the size below which Officers felt it would be appropriate to tailor the usual conditions and that getting the correct balance between public health and a viable business was important. The Member suggested that the recommendation should be amended to reflect this. This was agreed by the Committee.

In response to another question from a Member, the Business Unit Manager clarified that these conditions only apply to sites with planning permission for touring caravans, not gypsy and traveller sites.

One Member asked how Mid Sussex is consistent with other local authorities. The Business Unit Leader explained that the previously approved conditions are similar to those across Sussex.

Another Member asked whether there are time limits on these conditions. The Business Unit confirmed that there are not.

As there were no further Members wishing to speak, the Chairman took them to the recommendation.

RESOLVED

That officers be given discretion to grant a site licence with reduced standards for those sites with less than 15 units specified in the Mid Sussex District Council Licence Conditions.

16. LIQUOR LICENSING PANEL MINUTES

The Committee received and noted the minutes of the following meetings of the Liquor Licensing Panels held on:-

- (a) 27th August 2013;
- (b) 16th September 2013;
- (c) 2nd October 2013; and
- (d) 6th December 2013.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Liquor Licensing Panels listed above be received and noted, subject to the minutes of the meeting held on 27th August 2013 being amended as follows:-

- (1) "Cooke" to read "Cook";
- (2) "Austen" to read "Austin"; and
- (3) "Paulser" to read "Palser".

Chairman.