

LICENSING COMMITTEE

* Councillor David Elms (Chairman)
Councillor Dennis Paul (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Graham Ellwood | * Councillor Nigel Manning |
| * Councillor David Goodwin | * Councillor Marsha Moseley |
| * Councillor Gillian Harwood | * Councillor David Quelch |
| * Councillor Christian Holliday | Councillor Tony Rooth |
| * Councillor Mike Hurdle | * Councillor James Walsh |
| * Councillor Jennifer Jordan | Councillor David Wright |
| * Councillor Nigel Kearse | |

*Present

L54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Rooth and David Wright.

L55 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No disclosure of interests were declared.

L56 MINUTES

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 28 November 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

L57 TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE FEES AND AND CHARGES 2019-20

The Committee received a report regarding the proposed Taxi and Private Hire Fees and Charges for 2019-20. The Committee approved the methodology for calculating taxi fees and charges in September 2016. The methodology specified that all fees and charges were reconciled in a three-year rolling programme to ensure full cost recovery for the Council. The Council were currently in the second year where reconciliation of accounts would recover any surplus or deficit.

An increase in the fees and charges for licensed drivers, vehicles and operators was proposed for 2019-20. The increase in fees and charges was fuelled by a reduction in the number of licensed drivers, vehicles and operators. The reduction in Operator's applications was due to the switch in 2016 from a 1 year to a 5-year licence. The reduction in drivers and vehicles was due to a number of factors including some drivers pursuing licences with less stringent authorities that did not include livery and BTEC policies. In addition, the proliferation of Uber had resulted in customers not using Guildford licenced drivers/vehicles. Uber required drivers to be licenced by Transport for London (TfL). As a result of the increased competition, some drivers had left the trade and not renewed reducing the number of applications.

Despite a reduced number of applications being received, officer time spent on processing had not reduced owing to using a different database and having a number of temporary staff in the Business Support Team. The fee for Driver and Vehicle licences had been produced by removing some temporary staff time so the time was more reflective of the time spent when calculating the current fee. This was due to officers concerns that the trade would be charged for the increased time spent on the Licensing function.

The Committee discussed the report and considered whether there had been a steady decline in the number of applications received from drivers. It was explained by the Licensing Team Leader that there was no cap in Guildford on the number of Hackney Carriages and that

legislation did not allow a cap for private hire vehicles. The Committee noted that there had been a reduction in the number of drivers applying and taking the Knowledge Test in Guildford. There had also been a marked increase in the use of Uber in Guildford, which the trade had confirmed they were in fierce competition with. Guildford licensed drivers would be able to start using card payment devices in their vehicles as of April 2019.

The Committee agreed that Guildford's taxi licensed trade were at a disadvantage given that Uber's decision to use drivers licensed by TFL had reduced the number of licensed drivers in Guildford. Licensing Officers were therefore trying to engage with Uber over whether or not changes could be made in this respect. Ultimately, primary legislation would need to be changed so that authorities across Britain had more control over who was licensed to drive taxis within their respective boroughs. Guildford Borough Council set high standards for its drivers and it was important for the safety of the public that it was able to exercise control over drivers in its area.

The Committee was advised that, once agreed, the Taxi and Private Hire Fees and Charges for 2019-20 would be consulted on. The Committee would then be asked to consider any objections received at its next meeting on 25 March 2019. The Committee would also be asked to approve the variation to the methodology for calculating the 5 year Private Hire Operator fee for 2019-20. The fees and charges would then take effect on 1 April 2019.

The Committee having considered the report

RESOLVED

To approve the variation to the methodology for calculating the 5 year Private Hire Operator licence fee as set out in Appendix 1 of the report for the production of the Operator fee for 2019-20; and

That the Taxi and Private Hire Fees and Charges for 2019-20 as set out in Appendix 5 of the report were approved for public consultation as per the legal requirements to take effect at the end of the consultation period should no objections be received.

L58 LICENSING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted its work programme and that it would receive an updated work programme for 2019-20 at its next meeting in March 2019.

The meeting finished at 7.25 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman