

LICENSING COMMITTEE

* Councillor David Goodwin (Chairman)
Councillor Will Salmon (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Tim Anderson | * Councillor Ann McShee |
| Councillor Joss Bigmore | Councillor Marsha Moseley |
| * Councillor Dennis Booth | * Councillor George Potter |
| * Councillor Gillian Harwood | * Councillor Maddy Redpath |
| Councillor Gordon Jackson | * Councillor James Steel |
| Councillor Nigel Manning | * Councillor Catherine Young |
| * Councillor Ted Mayne | |

*Present

L1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joss Bigmore, Gordon Jackson, Nigel Manning, Marsha Moseley and Will Salmon.

L2 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

L3 MINUTES

The minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 27 November 2019 were confirmed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman wished for it to be noted, as stated in the minutes at L23, that the Council was not in favour of charging charitable organisations for licensing advice in relation to charitable collections applications or other activities as it was agreed that charities were excluded from this charging proposal.

L4 TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE FEES AND CHARGES 2020-21

The Committee considered the taxi and private hire fees and charges 2020-21 for public consultation. [The Committee also noted a minor error in the recommendation, whereby the reference to Appendix 3 should have read Appendix 8 in the report pack.] The Licensing Team Leader explained that the Licensing Committee reviewed the taxi and private hire fees and charges annually so as to ensure that the fees set were reasonable. The Council had a methodology for calculating the taxi licence fees which had been applied since it was approved by the Licensing Committee in 2016. Once the Committee approved the taxi and private hire fees and charges for consultation, a notice would be placed in the newspapers as well as notifying the taxi trade. Should any objections be received regarding the fee and charge changes, these would be considered by the Licensing Committee at their March 2020 meeting.

The Committee noted that some reductions to the vehicle fees and to the Hackney Carriage driver's knowledge test had been recommended as well as an increase to the driver licence fee. The fees were calculated by taking into account officer time, recording data on costs and the Council's rolling programme budget divided by the number of licence applications that the Council had received in the last year.

The Committee queried how the fees recommended compared with other Council's across the UK. The Licensing Team Leader confirmed that the fees and charges were comparable with other Council's. However, a process employed by Guildford was to record and charge for officer time. This was owing to the fact that the Council had been challenged 10 years ago by the taxi trade. Given that taxi fare setting was a contentious issue, licensing officers ensured that they recorded their time and costs were accounted fairly.

The Committee noted page 19 of Appendix 3, which showed the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Fees and Charges for 2020-21 where it appeared in three of the categories that the Council was running at a loss. The Committee wanted to understand how that would be rectified. The Licensing Team Leader confirmed that the Council had a rolling programme whereby any surpluses or deficits in the account were carried forward over a three-year period so to recover the deficit. The Committee agreed last year to divide the cost of the operator's fee over a five-year period. Therefore, when operators came to renew their five-year licences the Council would be able to recover the overall costs and break even.

The Committee discussed concerns raised that the Council was better able to deal with shortfalls in monies when it had access to funds that enabled it to take a more long-term approach when recovering deficits via the three-year rolling programme. Taxi drivers conversely would be more immediately affected by fees being increased or going down year on year. The Committee considered whether it would therefore be prudent to adopt a five-year rolling programme as per the private hire model. The Licensing Team Leader confirmed that the three-year rolling programme was a fair system for taxi drivers as if in deficit one year it would be unfair to recover it immediately the following year.

The Committee having considered the report;

RESOLVED that the Taxi and Private Hire Fees and Charges for 2020-21 as set out in Appendix 8 to the report be approved for public consultation and would take effect as of 1 April 2020, should no objections be received.

L5 LICENSING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted its work programme.

The meeting finished at 7.15 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman