

# LICENSING COMMITTEE

## Tuesday, 17 October 2023

**PRESENT** – Councillors, Imtiaz, Gee, Taylor, Gibson, Hardman, Hussain, Raja, Russell and Shorrocks.

**OFFICERS** – Tayyab Mulla (Governance Officer), Shelagh Lyth (Principle Solicitor), Niky Barret (Principle Licensing Officer)

### RESOLUTIONS

#### 23 **Welcome & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Denise Andrews (Licensing Manager), Councillors J Casey and T Fazal

#### 24 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** - The Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 18th July 2023 were approved as a correct record

#### 25 **Declaration of Interest**

No Declaration of Interests

#### 26 **Review of HC/PH fees and charges**

Members discussed a report which presented the review of discretionary fee level for private hire and hackney carriage drivers, vehicles and operators. The purpose of the report was for members to consider the review of the fees and agree the level of discretionary fees to be charged from 1st January 2024.

The Committee were informed that the fees were last comprehensively reviewed in 2015 and there had been a number of local authority pay awards and service restructures since that time which had all impacted on the costs to the authority of providing the taxi licensing service.

In addition to this the service were required to incorporate a number of changes to driver and vehicle requirements as required by new legislation and the introduction of the Government's Statutory Standards for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing. Officers had also considered the proposals against the fees charged by licensing authorities in east Lancashire and found them to be broadly consistent for driver and vehicle licences.

Members were reminded, that these licence fees were required to be set at a level that reflects the actual costs to the council, and that other local authorities may resource their licensing service differently and have different application processes.

#### **HC/PH Dual Driver Licences**

The Committee were informed that there were currently around twelve hundred valid driver licences in circulation. The service did encourage drivers to apply for three year licences, however there was still a proportion of drivers who had opted for a one year licence each year. This had impacted directly on resources as the service was currently processing around 25% more drivers applications each year than it would need to if the one year option was removed. It was also noted that the fees currently paid by drivers opting for three one year licences amounted to £60 more than the cost of a three year licence.

The Principle Licensing Officer had therefore recommended the Committee that the current option for drivers to apply for a one year HC/PHV (Hackney Carriage/ Private Hire Vehicle) dual driver's licences be withdrawn, subject to officers retaining the discretion to issue a one year licence on a case by case basis, as they think appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

Members were also advised that the fee for the driver training session had been increased to reflect the threefold increase in new applicants booking onto these sessions, which now necessitates two officers being in attendance and increased venue costs. As the demand for driver training was so high, each session was now being delivered to around thirty candidates, and so completely separate sessions were necessary for those candidates needing to re-sit the exam. This had resulted in a much higher increase in fees for resits. In addition to this the assessments were provided free of charge by adult learning for residents of the Borough and the licensing service was currently covering the cost for out of Borough applicants.

However, members were advised that a £25 cost was included in the fee review for those new applicants who were not residing in the Borough and who had no formal English qualifications.

Councillor Denise Gee had queried if there was a reason why there had been an increase in new applicants who were not residing in the borough, however the Principle Licensing Officer believed that the increase may be due to applicants' home authorities being too strict for applicants.

### **Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences**

The Principle Licensing Officer had informed the committee members that the council did not currently charge applicants for new vehicle licences for the plate for life that was issued, but it did charge £25 for all replacement plates produced.

It was proposed that the £25 fee is charged for new plates in addition to replacement ones, as these costs had now been removed from the licence fee calculations in order to minimise the fee increases for the majority of vehicle licence applicants who do not require a plate.

The cost to the council of the adhesive private hire door stickers had also increased significantly which had now necessitated an increase from £6.50 per pair to £10 per pair.

Members were recommended that the council would continue to offer a 20% licence fee reduction for hybrid vehicles but it was proposed to double the

subsidy for electric vehicles to 40% to further support the Council's climate change agenda by rewarding drivers who invest in greener vehicles.

Upon discussion with the members it was agreed that due to the financial implications of purchasing electric vehicles, drivers with electric vehicles should receive a 50% license fee reduction, instead of the proposed 40% to reward drivers who invested in greener vehicles.

The Principle Licensing Officer had recommended the committee that the proposed fees and charges that were set out in the appendix issued to the members were implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

**RESOLVED** – The Members recommend the proposed fees and charges as amended to be charged from 1st January 2024

## **27 Update on the work of the Public Protection Service**

The Committee received an update on the work of the Council's Public Protection and Environmental Health Services (PPS) where there was a connection with businesses and persons who required a licence from the Council. It also provided an update for Members on national policy changes and proposals affecting licencing work.

The Committee were informed that since the last Licensing Committee 1 appeal against the decision of the General Licensing Sub-Committees to revoke or refuse to grant driver licences had been concluded and the Magistrates Court upheld the council's decision.

However, the reason of the Magistrates Court to uphold the council decision was not due to an incorrect decision made by the sub-committee, but due to new information being provided in court.

**RESOLVED - The update be noted**

## **28 Minutes of Licensing Committee**

The Committee received the proceedings of the following Sub Committees:

General Licensing Sub Committee held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023

General Licensing Sub Committee held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023

General Licensing Sub Committee held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023

General Licensing Sub Committee held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**RESOLVED** – That the proceedings of the Sub Committees as outlined above were approved as a correct record, however it was noted that there was an error in the name on minutes for the General Licensing Sub Committee held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023 which would be corrected following the meeting. The minutes were duly signed by the Chair.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
at which the minutes were confirmed