

MINUTE
of
LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 18 January 2022.

Present:

Councillor Angela Convery (Chair)
Councillor Charlie Gilbert

Councillor Annette Ireland
Councillor Stewart Miller

Councillor Convery in the Chair

Attending:

Jacqui McCusker, Senior Solicitor; Brian Kilpatrick, Civic Government Enforcement Officer; Jennifer Graham, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Chief Inspector Alan Gray and Sergeant Lisa Campbell, Police Scotland.

Apology:

Councillor Betty Cunningham (Vice Chair).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1853. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982 – TAXI FARES REVIEW

1854. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 7 December 2021 (Page 1728, Item 1836 refers), when it was noted that the report would be continued to a future meeting, the committee considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement (Agenda Item 3 refers) seeking a review of taxi fares and a change of policy on the maximum age of private hire and taxi vehicles.

The report outlined that, before fixing fares and other charges, the licensing authority must review the scales in accordance with Section 17 (4A) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (the Act), in consultation with appropriate parties. Thereafter, the proposed scales would be published and any representations considered by the licensing authority prior to being finalised. The last review of taxi fares had taken place in 2015.

The views of taxi licence holders and best practice guidance issued by the Scottish Government were taken into account when reviewing the fares, and amendments to the tariffs, which were set out in Appendix I to the report, had been proposed. It was explained that East Renfrewshire was currently below the national and Scottish averages for taxi fares and proposed that an increase be considered.

The Senior Solicitor highlighted key aspects of the report advising that, in addition to the proposed tariff changes, consideration was being sought for a temporary change to the current policy on the maximum age of vehicles being licensed for the first time, to take account of a sharp rise in second hand vehicle prices.

In response to questions from Members, the Senior Solicitor confirmed that the tariffs agreed by the committee would be advertised and any representations brought back to the committee for consideration in due course.

Following discussion, Members proposed that the soiling charge be increased to £60, and the weekend tariff extended to 6am.

Having heard the Civic Government Enforcement Officer confirm that all taxi/private hire vehicles were subject to a rigorous inspection process, the committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the proposed new scales for the hire of taxis in East Renfrewshire and all other charges in connection with the hire of a taxi or with the arrangements of its hire as referred to in Appendix 1 of the report, except in relation to (b) and (c) below;
- (b) that the Soiling Charge be increased to £60;
- (c) that Tariff 3 should relate to journeys beginning on Friday and Saturday nights after midnight until 6.00am;
- (d) to authorise the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement to publish the proposed scales in a newspaper circulating in East Renfrewshire, and make associated arrangements in that regard, including the preparation of a further report on any representations received by the Council for the consideration of the Licensing Committee, if required;
- (e) to authorise the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement to make amendments in respect of any other changes; and
- (f) to amend the present policy on maximum age of vehicles being licensed for the first time as new or substitute taxis or private hire vehicles from five to six years old from first registration date for a temporary two year period from the date of this meeting.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the committee unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S LICENCE – APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL

1855. The committee considered a report by the Chief Officer – Legal and Procurement in relation to an application for the renewal of a Private Hire Driver's Licence (Agenda Item 4 refers).

The licence holder was present.

Chief Inspector Gray and Sergeant Campbell representing the Chief Constable, who had made an objection in respect of the application, were also present.

The report explained that in determining the application it would be for the committee to decide what weight it wished to attach to the objection by the Chief Constable.

Sergeant Campbell was heard in respect of the objection by the Chief Constable and in response to questions from Members. She clarified that two of the items referred to in the Police report were now "spent" and no longer relevant to the application under consideration.

The licence holder was then heard in respect of the application and in response to questions from Members.

The committee, having taken account of the objection by the Chief Constable, agreed that the application be approved and the licence be renewed for a period of 1 year subject to standard conditions.

CHAIR

