

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of Licensing Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Wednesday, 5 November 2008 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor James William Barrett (Chairman)

Councillors:

A K Holden	M D May
G Armstrong	P H May
L Armstrong	J M Proud
S Barr	J Shiell
M Gollan	A Willis
S Greatwich	

Officers:

L Howley (Chief Environmental Health Officer), H Johnson (Licensing Officer), J Maughan (Licensing Administrator), S Marshall (Democratic Services Assistant) and D Lines (Modern Apprentice - Environmental Services)

Also in attendance: Mr Biggs (representing the Chester-le-Street Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Working Group).

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Court, Humes, M Potts, K Potts, Smith and Turner.

10. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 2 JULY 2008

It was proposed and seconded that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed.

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the meeting held 2 July 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be agreed as a correct record."

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

12. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There was one member of the public present at the meeting and the Chairman advised he would invite him to speak at the appropriate time during the meeting.

13. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Environmental Health Officer asking Members to agree a proposed increase to the hackney carriage tariff.

The Licensing Officer advised Members that any proposed increase agreed would be subject to a 14 day public consultation period including placing an advert in a local paper and letters being sent to members of the trade. She advised that the cost of publishing the public notice would be met from existing budgets along with the cost of postage and producing the new tariff stickers.

The Licensing Officer went on to advise that the overall fare was made up from two separate calculations, the “flag” and the “yardage” and that the proposed increase for tariffs was shown in Appendix 2 of the report.

She also stated that the members of the Chester-le-Street Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Working Group had expressed the reasoning for proposing such an increase was due to the significant rise in the price of fuel and the cost of living.

Mr Biggs, representative of the Chester-le-Street Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Working Group, was invited to speak by the Chairman.

Mr Briggs stated that the Working Group had put forward the proposed tariff increases mainly due to the rise in the price of fuel and also the cost of living. He advised that Chester-le-Street’s position in the National League Tables for Average Fares had dropped to 340 out of 375 and that there could be a possibility of fares rising to the level of those charged in Sedgefield once the unitary authority came into force which would be a large increase in fares for the residents of Chester-le-Street. He commented that many of the drivers were considering not driving for a living, as they were not making enough money to live on. He also stated that the fleet of taxis in Chester-le-Street were considered amongst the best and the drivers wished for this to remain the same but felt this was impossible due to there not having been a fare increase.

Discussion ensued in relation to the proposed increases, the national league table of fares and the possibility of much larger fare increases in April 2009.

Concerns were raised that part of the district did not received the “Advertiser” in which it was suggested that the public notice be placed. The Chief Environmental Health Officer advised that the notice would also be placed on

the Council's website but that a second advertisement could be placed in another local paper to ensure a good quality consultation.

Councillor Gollan requested that a further report be circulated to Members once the consultation had taken place so that a more informed decision could be made.

The Chief Environmental Health Officer advised that once the consultation period had expired and provided there were no objections, the new tariffs could be implemented. He advised that Members would be advised of the outcomes of the consultation process as a matter of course.

Councillor L Armstrong requested that the consultation process be extended from 14 days as this was not enough time for Members to discuss the matter at their monthly surgeries.

RESOLVED: "That the Members agree the proposal made by the Chester-le-Street Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Working Group to increase the taxi tariffs subject to a second advert being placed in a local paper and the consultation period being extended to 21 days."

14. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS. TO RESOLVE:

RESOLVED: "That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act."

15. LICENSING TEAM BRIEFING NOTE

The Licensing Officer spoke in relation to the Briefing Note and introduced Members to the Modern Apprentice who had been appointed in July 2008.

She went on to provide an update regarding decisions made by the Licensing Sub Committee and the Licensing Statutory Committee.

In relation to the Taxi Compliance Check Day, the Licensing Officer advised that this had been carried out in conjunction with Durham Constabulary and an article had been placed in District News.

With regard to the Alcohol Harm Reduction Group, she advised that Inspector Anderson, of Durham Constabulary, had secured funding to introduce possible initiatives such as the nationally recognised "Best Bar None" scheme, taxi marshals and polycarbonate glasses for licensed premises.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

The meeting terminated at 7.04 pm

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