

LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16th April, 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

In a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor Sears (Chairman)
Councillor Tweddle (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Anson
Councillor Barton
Councillor Beilby
Councillor Bird
Councillor Cassidy
Councillor P. Hughes
Councillor Rochelle
Councillor Smith
Councillor Wilkes

1143/08 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Beeley and Micklewright

1144/08 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 5th March 2008 and 19th March 2008 were both approved as a correct record.

1145/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1146/08 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

Councillor Smith questioned why the issues at item 7 on the agenda were for consideration in Private Session.

At this juncture the members of the public present at the meeting were asked to withdraw from the meeting so that an explanation could be given.

Mr. Corlett advised Members that the item was for consideration in Private Session because of the information given in paragraphs 11.6 – 11.10 of the report relating to criminal record bureau disclosures.

It was **moved** and duly **seconded**:-

That the item be taken in the Private Session of the agenda.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared **carried**, nine Members voting in favour and two against.

Resolved

That the item be taken in the Private Session of the agenda.

1147/08

Taxi Matters

(a) Issue of 12 month licences for vehicles for both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles

The report of the Head of Public Protection was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Mr. Corlett outlined the report and responded to questions from Members.

Resolved

That approval be given to the change in relation to the issue of hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licenses by the removal of the 4 month licence and the issue of 12 month licences only.

(b) Application for a hackney carriage fare increase

The report of the Head of Public Protection was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The following resolution of the Taxi/Private Hire Liaison Group from the meeting held on 12th March, 2008 was submitted:-

“It was **AGREED** to recommend to Licensing and Safety Committee:-

- (a) That approval be given to a 30% increase in hackney carriage fares between the hours of 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.;
- (b) That fares between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. remain unchanged;
- (c) That approval be given to extending the double fares charged over the Christmas and New Year periods from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Years Eve and New Years Day”.

Councillor Rochelle expressed the view that the increase should also apply to daytime fares. It was pointed out that the trade had asked for an increase in all taxi fares between the hours of 10.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. the following morning.

Councillor Smith asked what publicity is given to the increase in charges generally. By way of explanation, the Council's legal advisor, Mr. Patouchas, indicated that there was a requirement to advertise any increase in fees. Councillor Smith asked that consideration be given to including the publicity in Walsall Pride and Walsall Councils website and that a report be submitted to the next meeting on how these can best communicate the increase to the public.

It was **moved** and duly **seconded**:-

That approval be given to the recommendation of the Taxi/Private Hire Liaison Group from its meeting on the 12th March and that Officers be instructed to advertise the increase in accordance with the legislation and also on the Councils website and in Walsall Pride.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared **carried**, with ten Members voting in favour and one against.

Resolved

That approval be given to the recommendation of the Taxi/Private Hire Liaison Group from its meeting on the 12th March and that Officers be instructed to advertise the increase in accordance with the legislation and also on the Councils website and in Walsall Pride.

1148/08

Gambling Act 2005 (a) Training

The Councils legal advisor, Mr. Patouchas, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Gambling Act 2005 and responded to questions.

Resolved

That the presentation be received and noted.

(b) Draft documents to accompany notice of hearings

A copy of draft documents to accompany notice of hearings in relation to the Gambling Act 2005 was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the draft documents be received and noted.

1149/07 **Private Session**

Exclusion of Public

Resolved

That during consideration of the remaining items on the agenda the committee considers that the items for consideration are exempt information for the reasons set out therein and Section 100a of the Local Government Act, 1972 and accordingly resolves to consider those items in private.

1150/07 **Taxi Matters**

- 1. Criminal Record Bureau Disclosures**
- 2. Consideration for updating criteria (requirement to undergo English test) attached to the application for the grant of a licence to drive private hire and hackney carriage vehicles;**
- 3. Consideration for updating criteria (requirement to undergo knowledge test) attached to the application for the grant of a licence to drive private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.**

The report of the Head of Public Protection was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Mr. Corlett outlined the report and responded to questions. In doing so he indicated that the legislation did not allow Licensing Officers to refuse to accept an application.

There followed a short discussion and it was:-

Resolved

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That approval be given that further enquiries be made in to the feasibility of implementing an English test and a knowledge test on the application for the grant of a licence;
- (c) That a report following further consultation be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (d) That Officers investigate the situation with regard to Birmingham, Dudley, London and Sandwell regarding their knowledge tests.

(Exempt information under Paragraph 3 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

Councillor Beilby

The Chairman advised Members that Councillor Beilby would be retiring at the end of the current Municipal Year. He wished her well for the future and conveyed his thanks to her for her work on the Licensing and Safety Committee. This view was echoed by other Members of the Committee.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman

Date