

SPECIAL LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17th March, 2005 at 6.00 p.m.

In a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor Keith Sears (Chairman)
Councillor Clive Ault
Councillor Joan Barton
Councillor Leslie Beeley
Councillor Joan Beilby
Councillor Arthur Bentley
Councillor Barbara Cassidy
Councillor Gary Clarke
Councillor Ayshea Johnson
Councillor Cath Micklewright
Councillor Robbie Robinson
Councillor Carol Rose
Councillor Rachel Walker
Councillor Mohammad Yasin

749/05 Changes in Membership

The following changes in membership, for this meeting only, were noted:-

Delete:	Councillor Tweddle
Substitute:	Councillor Walker

Delete:	Councillor Rochelle
Substitute:	Councillor Yasin

750/05 Apologies

There were no apologies.

751/05 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Yasin declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 11 on the agenda relating to a private hire driver convicted of a serious offence and left the meeting during consideration of this item.

752/05

Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

753/05

Taxi Licensing - Increase in Licence Fees and Costs

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

(see annexed)

A letter from the Walsall Private Hire Association was circulated.

Members were advised that, from time to time, the fees were adjusted to cover the costs of carrying out, on behalf of the Authority, inspections of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and operators for the purpose of determining whether such licence should be granted and to cover any reasonable administrative or other costs in connection with this and with the control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles. Members were further advised that the Department had not implemented any increases in fees or charges since 2000. There was a need by the Department to increase its revenue to cover the increase in costs, in consequence of the transfer of the Licensing Department to new premises in August, 2004 and the recruitment of two new Enforcement Officers and supporting staff.

Members expressed their concern at the proposed increases and suggested that these should have been covered on an annual basis. It was explained to Members that the Council could not levy an annual increase, it could only impose an increase to cover its costs in carrying out the taxi licensing function. The Chairman pointed out that the service could not operate at a loss as it would be deemed irresponsible.

Councillor Robinson expressed the view that if the report was accepted, the fees would be increased. He pointed out that although the Council had to cover the costs of the new premises and the newly recruited staff, this was not the fault of the taxi or private hire owners.

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

That this issue be referred back to the Taxi/Private Hire Liaison Group for consideration.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared **lost**, four Members voting in favour and six against.

It was **moved** by the Chairman and duly **seconded**:-

That the proposed increase in fees and charges, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

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

Resolved

That the proposed increase in fees and charges, as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

754/05

Deferred Items

(a) Application by Walsall Taxi Federation for an increase in fees and charges

Members were advised that this issue would be considered at the Taxi/Private Hire Liaison Group meeting to be held on 22nd March, 2005.

Resolved

That this item stand deferred.

(b) Street Trading - Public Liability Insurance

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal Services was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Members welcomed the report.

Resolved

That a condition be imposed on all future licences that street traders provide details of public liability insurance in the sum of £5 million and that the same condition be imposed on all renewal applications.

(c) Street Collections - Issue of Badges

Members were reminded that this issue had arisen during consideration of applications for street collections in aid of the Tsunami appeal. Members had been concerned that the collectors were seen to be bona fide collectors and had suggested issuing each collector with a badge. Members had been advised that although the legislation governing house to house collections provided for the issue of badges for those collectors, the legislation governing street collections did not provide the same facility.

Resolved

That this information be noted.

755/05

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.

Summary of Matters considered in Private Session

Private Hire Licences

The Committee considered representations in respect of a number of taxi/private hire matters and made decisions thereon.

(Exempt information under Paragraphs 7 and 14 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972)

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.05 p.m.

Chairman

Date