

Minutes of Licensing

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 6 September 2022, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Brunskill (Chair)

Councillors:

J Alcock	S O'Rourke
R Bennett	S Rainford
I Brown	J Rogerson
S Farmer	G Scott
S Hore	R Walsh
D O'Rourke	

In attendance: Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Solicitor

266 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for the meeting were received from Councillors A Humphreys, R Newmark and G Hibbert.

267 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

268 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests.

269 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

270 HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking Committee approve the review of Hackney Carriage fares.

The report explained that Hackney Carriage fares were set by Committee on 10 August 2006, had last been reviewed in 2017, but that fares had not been increased for 16 years. The report noted that the costs of providing the service had increased significantly due to a number of factors, particularly the cost of fuel, which was placing considerable economic pressure on the Hackney Carriage licence holders. Whilst the increase of fares would also impact the public; it was proposed that fares be increased to a rate which would reflect the increased costs to drivers but not impact too heavily on the public. The proposed fares were set out in the report.

The matter was to be discussed at the annual taxi meeting scheduled for 21 September 2022, allowing licence holders to present any consultation responses. Going forward it was proposed that fares be reviewed annually.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approved the proposed fares set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to advertise the proposed table of fares as required by legislation.

271

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE KNOWLEDGE TEST

The Chief Executive submitted a report proposing the revision of the knowledge test undertaken by prospective Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle drivers.

The report explained that the knowledge test was part of the Council's assessment of whether an applicant for private hire or hackney carriage licence was a fit and proper person to hold a licence. The knowledge test required applicants to name each and every road between locations by the most efficient route, answer questions on where a particular landmark is situated, and explain hackney carriage bylaws and the highway code. The applicant had to achieve a minimum number of points on each page of the test, and, if unsuccessful, was allowed to re-sit on four occasions but would not then be allowed a further attempt for one year.

The report reminded Committee that the knowledge test remained an important part of assessing whether an applicant was a fit and proper person to hold a licence and ensured that the public could have confidence in the driver's knowledge and efficiency. The purpose of the test was to ensure that applicants had the required knowledge and not that they were able to list information. Therefore, it was proposed that the knowledge test be amended to include multiple choice questions, which required the applicant to select the shortest route between two specified locations, and that the applicant be required to achieve a minimum overall score.

It was proposed at the meeting that Committee consider the introduction of drugs testing for drivers as a further measure to ensure safety and diligence. Officers agreed investigate the subject and report to a future Committee.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

- Authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to revise the knowledge tests as set out in the report.

272

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TRAINING

The Chief Executive submitted a report requesting Committee determine the appropriate manner of training required for applicants for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's licences in respect of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and identifying the signs of CSE.

The report explained that Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers licenced by the Council were required to have completed a course in respect of safeguarding against and identifying the signs of Child Sexual Exploitation. The free course which had been provided by Lancashire County Council had been withdrawn. Therefore, it was

proposed that another provider be designated to provide the training, as completion of the course remained an important aspect of the licensing process.

It was proposed that the safeguarding course be provided by the Blue Lamp Trust in the future, who were an experienced provider to over 100 licensing authorities. The report explained the different courses that the Blue Lamp Trust offered for a relatively modest fee to applicants, and the considerations Officers had made resulting in the recommendation that applicants undertake the virtual classroom course option. It was confirmed at the meeting that, when attending the virtual classroom, the course provider checked the ID of attendees and ensured the attendee remained visible throughout the course. Attendance on the two-and-a-half-hour course costs £25.00.

Committee was also asked to consider implementing a requirement for operators to have a nominated trained safeguarding lead. It was suggested at the meeting that consideration could be given to appointing an Officer of the Council as safeguarding contact to ensure that smaller firms were supported. This option would be discussed at the annual taxi meeting scheduled for 21 September 2022.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. That applicants for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's licences in the Ribble Valley attend the virtual classroom provided by the Blue Lamp trust for taxi driver safeguarding training and that any consequential amendments be made to the Council's taxi policy and licence conditions.
2. That Committee authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to consult with operators and other interested parties on the introduction of a condition requiring each operator to nominate a safeguarding lead and to provide for their initial and refresher training.

273

TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING OPERATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee of the results of an inspection of licensed private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.

The report explained that on 13 June 2022, the Council's Taxi Enforcement Officer had carried out inspections of licensed private hire and hackney carriage vehicles, in a joint operation with the Police, and Vehicle and Operator Services Agency. The Council's Taxi Enforcement Officer had inspected six vehicles, which were all found to be of the required standard, reflecting positively on the taxi and private hire fleet in the Ribble Valley, and providing reassurance to the public regarding their safety and comfort.

274

REBUILDING THE UK'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee of the principal issues considered at a training webinar attended by the Council's Licensing Enforcement Officer on Rebuilding the UK's Night-time Economy: Recovering from Covid-19 and Creating a Safe, Diverse, Thriving Night-time Economy.

The event which had been held on 4 August 2022, included contributions from Members and Officers from a number of metropolitan and city authorities and others involved in the regulation and promotion of the night-time economy, was a training exercise organised by the Public Policy Exchange, and had been a useful presentation regarding trends and possible initiatives relating to night-time economy.

The report listed the factors highlighted by the training, which were confirmed to be national statistics and not specific to the Ribble Valley.

275 MINUTES OF LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Committee received the minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee meetings of 6 June 2022, 14 June 2022, and 11 July 2022.

276 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

277 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items under this heading.

The meeting closed at 7.01 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Rebecca Tait rebecca.tait@ribblevalley.gov.uk.