

CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the LICENSING & REGULATION COMMITTEE held on 26 MARCH 2015

PRESENT: Councillor P N Shepherd - Chairman

Councillors: P M Jones
D J Lacey
C H Spruytenburg
J F Warder
A P Williams

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillors M Vivis, N L Brown, Mrs J A Burton, M J Cunnane, G K Harris, D G Meacock, M Prince, N M Rose and J J Rush

30 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2015, copies of which had been previously circulated, were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32 GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

There was a requirement to review every 3 years and so the Statement of Principles has been updated with only minor adjustments recommended. Three main changes were put to the committee:

1. Area profile to be moved from the appendix to the front of the document as recommended by the guidance.
2. To give a higher profile to the public register.
3. To give more information about information sharing.

There had been no significant issues arising over the past few years. If the proposed changes were acceptable, there would be a 12 week consultation and then the changes would need to be agreed at the next full council meeting.

RESOLVED

To agree the proposed changes to the Statement of Principles and delegate to the Head of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Chair of the Licensing and Regulation Committee to make any minor changes necessary following the consultation process.

33 HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING FEES CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The changes in the fees structure had been discussed at previous meetings and had followed a 28 day consultation process. There had been notices in the local newspapers, website notices, current licensees had been contacted by text and there was a drop-in day to discuss the fees. The drop-in day was held jointly with South Bucks and 11 people attended from Chiltern District. Four responses had been received to represent 7 licence holders. The responses can be summarised as follows:

1. There were objections to the increase in fees, as work had decreased due to the economic slowdown.
2. Objections because the increase in fees was too much.
3. Letter from CabCo Taxi's that the fee represents a major hardship for local operators.
4. Positive response to the introduction of 3 year licences.

There was a request for an increase in taxi rank provision although this was not a function of the district council. Previously a review was carried out in Chesham with Bucks Highways but no agreement was reached.

It was noted that there would be no increase in the licence for existing holders at renewal. New drivers would have to pay a higher fee but existing holders were complaining that too many licences were being issued. A new stepped approach was being introduced for private hire operators, so that the larger ones would pay a higher fee than those with fewer cars.

It was suggested that a request be made for Bucks Highways to carry out a new review of possible taxi rank sites. It was noted that this could incur a cost to the district which would be recovered in the future using the fees structure. The problem encountered in Chesham, with taxi's waiting on yellow lines was discussed and the need for a consultation with business groups, Highways and operators. The Chairman requested that this issue be revisited in the new municipal year.

The Licensing section was currently seeking feedback and invited customers to complete a short survey at: <http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Licensing>

RESOLVED

That the fees structure be agreed without modification to take effect from 1 May 2015.

34 TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE UPDATE

The Committee had been asked to read and discuss an article in the Local Government Association First magazine called Taxi and Private Hire: Putting Passengers First. The article had arisen following the concerns around taxi trade involvement with child exploitation. The report recommended improvements, putting an emphasis on safety and information sharing. The Chiltern District already has good community safety links including meetings with the Community Safety Partnership which includes the Police. There was already extensive data sharing and partnership working through the Police Tasking approach and through crime prevention initiatives.

There would be training for Members, particularly those who are on the licensing sub-committees in relation to conducting hearings and decision making.

The recent policy review had tightened up the 'fit and proper person' test. A licence is not granted to those with a history of sexual offences or where there were concerns over the fitness of an applicant.

All complaints from customers are recorded but that officers would review the analysis of data to enable trends to be identified.

There was currently a much lower incidence of driver misbehaviour being brought before the sub-committees.

It was noted that the Chairman and Officers would be attending the Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle conference on 31 March 2015 in London, to discuss the issues and share best practise.

RESOLVED

That the article on passenger safety be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.09 pm