

**LICENSING COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**  
**MONDAY, 8 JANUARY 2024**

**Councillors Present:** Phil Barnett (Chairman), Paul Dick (Vice-Chairman), Billy Drummond, Owen Jeffery, David Marsh, Stephanie Steevenson, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor and Martha Vickers

**Also Present:** Moira Fraser (Principal Officer - Policy & Governance), Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), Thomas Radbourne (Zoom Host), Vikki Rigden (Lead Applications Officer), Benjamin Ryan (Clerk) and Riley Timney (Licensing Officer)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Paul Kander and Councillor Jane Langford

**Councillor Absent:** Councillor Nigel Foot

**PART I**

**1. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**3. Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2024**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4) concerning Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2024. Ms Moira Fraser introduced the report.

Councillor Stephanie Steevenson raised concerns that the trade had not submitted a business case concerning the tariffs in time to get a decision made so that they could be implemented by the 1 April as had previously been agreed. Ms Fraser confirmed that while it was preferable that they be submitted in time to have them in place by the 1 April to aid the trades financial planning there was no requirement for this to happen.

Councillor Owen Jeffrey was apprehensive that Officers were proposing that a Public Notice only be placed in the Newbury Weekly News, however stated that if it was a substantial saving, he would not press the issue. Ms Fraser added that the Council would save around £1000 by removing the Public Notice from the Reading Chronicle. Previous consultations showed that the public notices did not tend to generate consultation responses albeit that it was a legal requirement to place a public notice in at least one local newspaper.

Councillor Taylor expressed that as he was from the area where the Reading Chronicle would have covered, he felt that another paper could be cheaper and that perhaps Reading Today could be asked for a quote for placing a notice.

Councillor Jeffery queried whether a smaller advertisement could be published, and Ms Fraser explained that the contents of the Public Notice were statutory, therefore it could not be condensed further.

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Councillor Paul Dick expressed that the matter of publication of the Public Notice had been discussed in the previous meeting and that other avenues of reaching the trade were being discussed. He therefore supported the officer recommendation to place a single public notice should the Executive be minded going ahead with the consultation.

Councillor Dick proposed the recommendations laid out within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Billy Drummond.

**RESOLVED that** the Licensing Committee

2.1 NOTED the existing tariffs in Appendix A.

2.2 NOTED the proposals set out in the request from the trade at Appendix B.

2.3 Agreed to recommend the consultation process as set out in the report after considering their options.

2.4 RESOLVED to propose to the Executive that publication of the statutory notice appears in only one local newspaper.

#### 4. **Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's Fees**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 5) concerning Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's Fees. Mr Sean Murphy introduced the report.

Councillor Dick noted from the consultation that the trade had expressed, they did not want the fees increasing and even though it was not practical the Committee should consider the lowest figure possible.

The Chairman stated that the future was uncertain with inflation and Officers needed to balance the books and the fees were set on a cost recovery basis.

Councillor Steevenson noted the response regarding the delayed issuing of licenses and stated that this made it difficult to justify price increases. The Chairman expressed that the Committee needed to help make sure the Licensing team were adequately resourced to provide the service, as at the time of speaking the team was understaffed and that they needed to raise prices in line with the inflation of the resources to create the license. Mr Murphy stated that the Licensing Team was looking to fill several vacancies. Mr Murphy added that although inflation fluctuated, the team had to pick an index point.

Councillor Jeffery expressed disappointment as the taxi trade was not present to express their opinion and questioned whether the taxi trade was notified of the meeting. Mr Murphy explained that there were separate meetings with the trade to get their opinions. As this was a public meeting the trade were able to attend should they have wished to do so. They had been made aware of the date of the meeting.

Councillor Taylor queried the maximum number of responses possible, and whether the responses represented groups. Ms Fraser was unsure, but believed the maximum number of responses could be around 300, however the eight received were individual responses and it was four more than the previous year.

Councillor David Marsh asked whether there were still reduced license fees for low emission taxis and Mr Murphy confirmed that the initiative was in the second year of its three-year term and that there was still a 100% rebate for electric cars and 50% for low emission.

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Councillor Dick proposed the recommendations outlined in the report with an alteration to the rise in fees to be 4.68% (hourly rate of £67) across the fee structure. This was seconded by Councillor Jeffery.

**RESOLVED** that the Licensing Committee:

2.1 NOTED the comments received during the statutory consultation on variations to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle and private hire operator's fees as set out in Appendix A to this report.

2.3 That all discretionary fees within the Public Protection Partnership be increased by 4.68%.

### 5. **Minor Changes to the Licensing Policy Arising from Amended S182 Guidance**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning the Minor Changes to the Licensing Policy Arising from Amended S182 Guidance. Ms Fraser introduced the Report.

Councillor Steevenson pointed out an error on the Appendix A poster, which was noted by Ms Fraser.

Councillor Dick explained it was an excellent report and he fully supported it.

Councillor Martha Vickers felt that the poster provided important information and that they should be disseminated to all Councillors to distribute within their Wards.

Mr Murphy added that the Licensing Team would need to work with everyone to help minimise the risk of spiking and that it might be worth inviting Thames Valley Police to a future meeting to discuss the matter further.

Councillor Dick proposed the recommendations set out within the report, which was seconded by Councillor Jeffery.

**RESOLVED** that the Licensing Committee:

- 2.1 NOTED the changes to the Statutory Guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003.
- 2.2 RESOLVED to authorise the Service Lead – Public Protection in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee to amend the West Berkshire Licensing Policy to reflect the changes to the Section 182 Guidance.

### 6. **Briefing Note - Update on the Community Alcohol Partnership**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning the Briefing Note - Update on the Community Alcohol Partnership. Mr Murphy introduced the report.

Councillor Marsh expressed that vaping was a significant issue especially regarding, smoking outside schools, underage consumption, and the environmental impact. The Councillor encouraged the Committee to consider having a wider discussion on the matter at a future meeting.

Ms Fraser explained that the Licensing Team worked with vendors of vapes to help mitigate sales to minors.

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Councillor Billy Drummond asked whether the team struggled to get volunteers for the Challenge 25 checks and Ms Fraser stated that it was not.

Councillor Drummond queried whether the safeguarding of young men had been considered, in Paragraph 4.2 of the Report and Mr Murphy expressed that young men were included.

Councillor Steevenson asked whether the Licensing Team undertook test purchasing for vapes and Mr Murphy confirmed they had been carried out.

The report was for information only.

The Chairman asked the Committee for their opinions on whether introducing site visits for Sub-Committees should be pursued.

Councillors Drummond, Taylor and Sturgess supported the initiative.

Councillor Dick showed concerns over the necessity of all site-visits especially if it consumed a large portion of Officer time.

Councillor Vickers was unsure over the use of site visits, because of the potential use of resources and that Member's opinions may be considered less valuable if they did not attend the site-visits.

Councillor Steevenson stated that in the most recent Sub-Committee it would have been useful to have seen the actual site and that an actual map of the area would be useful in the agendas. Ms Vikki Rigden stated that the team could investigate adding maps in the future.

It was agreed by the Committee that the next Special Licensing Committee would take place on the 4 March 2024 at 16:30 pm.

*(The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm and closed at 6.05 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....