
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE, 15.09.14

Present: Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Chairman)
Councillor Huw Edwards (Vice-chairman)

Councillors Eddie Dogan, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Dilwyn Lloyd, W.Tudor Owen, Angela Russell, Ann Williams, Elfed W Williams

Also Present: Siôn Huws (Senior Solicitor), Sheryl Le Bon Jones (Licensing Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams was elected as Chairman for this meeting only.

2. CENTRAL LICENSING COMMITTEE AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE CHAIRMANSHIP

A report was presented by the Senior Solicitor detailing the Committee's dissatisfaction in the last meeting to be able to elect one member as Chairman on the Central Licensing Committee and the General Licensing Committee.

Through setting the background, it was noted that the Central Licensing Committee was established to deal with issues under the 2003 Licensing Act and the 2005 Gambling Act. It was a statutory requirement to establish this committee and it was not possible to consider any other issue.

As a result the General Committee was established to make decisions on other matters. Constitutionally they were two different committees that held separate meetings. Even so, the Council decided that both committees would include the same 15 members as was noted in the Constitution.

As a general rule, it was noted in the Constitution that the same member could not be Chairman of more than one Committee. Under the current Constitution, it was necessary to appoint two different members to chair the committees.

Members of the Committee expressed, as was the case in the previous meeting (23.6.2014) that the same member should be allowed to chair both committees. This meant that it would be necessary to amend the Council's Constitution only for these Committees, by presenting recommendations to the Council's next meeting for approval.

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED TO RECOMMEND TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL, (9.10.14) APPROVE THE PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION (Part 4/Procedure Rules/10 Para 1,2 and 5) ONLY FOR BOTH LICENSING COMMITTEES.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Huw Edwards was elected as Vice-chairman for this meeting only

4. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman, Councillor Eryl Jones Williams, welcomed everyone to the Committee. Apologies were received from Councillors Llywarch Bowen Jones and Peter Read

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

6. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 23 June 2014 as a true record.

8. UPDATING THE WORDING OF THE HACKNEY AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES LICENSING POLICY

The Head of the Regulatory Department's report was presented stating that there needed to be small changes to the wording of the Hackney / Private Hiring Vehicles Licensing Policy to update it, so that it coincided with current taxi licensing administration processing arrangements.

Gwynedd's amended policy had been submitted to Members
Changes included:

- Getting rid of details of the Licensing Unit's contact point officers that were no longer current
- Changing every reference to 'vehicle licensee' to 'vehicle owner'
- Deleting clause (d) of condition 9 in its entirety as it referred to the process of transferring a license from one vehicle to another. Legal advice was sought recently not to permit the transfer of a licence from one vehicle to another vehicle as there is no provision in relevant legislation to allow such a process.

IT WAS DECIDED TO APPROVE THE SMALL CHANGES TO THE WORDING OF HACKNEY AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES LICENSING POLICY.

9. PROPOSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE, PRIVATE HIRE AND OPERATORS LICENCE FEES

In this committee's previous meeting that had been held on 23.6.2014, the Head of the Regulatory Department had submitted a report asking the committee to consider and approve the proposal to increase all taxi fees by 19.78%. It was noted that the proposed increase would be subject to statutory consultation with the taxi industry, and that the service provision costs would be annually assessed.

In accordance with Section 70 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1976, public notice of proposed changes to fees had to appear in local press. A notice had been presented in the press on 16.7.2014 and the details had been put on the Council's website. In addition to the statutory consultation, a letter had been sent to all taxi vehicle owners in Gwynedd (around 400) explaining in full the reason for the need to increase the fees. The consultation period ended 13.8.2014 and one letter had been received objecting the increase.

The objection was considered by the Committee. Disappointment was expressed that only one individual submitted written objection to the increase based on,

- the fact that substantial increase to taxi licensing fee costs had already been submitted over the previous years
- Concern that the additional costs would mean that it would not be possible to employ more drivers; and that it would even be difficult to continue to employ the current drivers

It was proposed that the Licensing Department respond through writing to the objector.

The Licensing Manager noted that a letter and explanation had already been sent to the objector.

RESOLVED TO INCREASE ALL TAXI LICENSING FEES 19.78% IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT THE COMMITTEE AGREED AT THE 23.6.14 MEETING AND CONSULTED ON IN ORDER TO PROCEED TO RECLAIM THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICE IN FULL.

It was proposed to invite the objector to a formal Committee meeting to give the individual the opportunity to share his comments. Even so, it was emphasised that the decision of increasing fees had been made and that it had been effective from 15.9.14

RESOLVED TO ASK THE LICENSING DEPARTMENT TO CONTACT THE INDIVIDUAL AND INVITE HIM TO THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT MEETING (8.12.14).

Everyone was thanked for their contribution.

The meeting commenced at 10:15am and concluded at 11:00am.