

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Licensing and Regulatory Committee** held in
Committee Room 1 on **25 April 2018** at **1:30 pm**

PRESENT

Councillor J I Hutchinson
(Chair in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

T Cessford
B Crosby
K Parry
W Pattison

G Roughead
C Seymour
K Stow

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

H Bowers
T Hardy
N Masson
D Sayer

Democratic Services Officer
Licensing Manager
Principal Solicitor
Business Compliance & Public Safety Manager

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Press - 1

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gibson, Nisbet, Richards, Purvis, Sharp and Wilson.

The Chair referred to apologies from those members who had been absent at the previous meeting and requested that a letter be sent to members informing them that if they were to submit apologies, then a reason should be given.

He also informed members that Phil Soderquest was now Head of Housing & Public Protection.

12. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee held on Wednesday 20 December 2017, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

13. SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the sub-committees held on the following dates be received for information:-

- (a) 9 January 2018
- (b) 18 January 2018

14. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

14.1 Licensing of Taxis and Private Hire (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill

The above report informed members of a relevant Private Members Bill and related activity by the Local Government Association and the National Anti-Fraud Network.

The Business Compliance & Public Safety Manager advised members that a Private Members Bill had been introduced into parliament by Daniel Zeichner who was an MP from Cambridge.

The Bill intended to provide additional safeguarding for Licensing Authorities by creating a national database of drivers who have had their application or renewal of licence refused or revoked following issues in Rochdale, Rotherham and Newcastle.

The relevant information was listed on page 23 of the report.

A national database was to be set up which would enable all Licensing Authorities to have access. When a driver has their application or application for renewal of a driver's licence refused or who have had their licence revoked or suspended, the Authority will be required to add all relevant information to the database.

The North East Strategic Licensing Group (NESLG) operated a similar system for the northern region which would tie in with the national procedure.

The Local Government Association had commissioned the National Anti-fraud Network (NAFN) to develop and host the database and it was hoped that this would be up and running soon and members would be kept up to date.

RESOLVED that members note the content of the report.

14.2 Hackney Carriage Tariffs

Members were provided with information concerning the existing fare tariff and to consider whether or not it is appropriate to increase the tariff to reflect increases in the general cost of living.

Tasmin Hardy, Licensing Manager informed members that the Authority currently had 6 hackney carriage zones which related to the old district boundaries. Each of the zones had its own tariff.

Different tariff methods had been set over the years and the report was before members as a request had been received to increase tariffs across the board. This had gone out to consultation but a low number of responses had been received. A fair proportion of consultees preferred the tariff to remain the same whilst others preferred an increase.

The last increase in the tariff had been in 2013 and the current fare tariffs were set out in Appendix A of the report.

The Licensing Manager informed members that officers did not have specific recommendation and that it was up to members to determine the changes.

Discussion took place regarding the following:-

- The 3 tariffs
- Whether the tariffs could be increased annually
- Larger vehicles charging a higher rate
- Could the tariffs be reduced?
- Where there extra charges for wheelchair accessibility cars?

The Licensing Manager requested a steer of members' preference and a further report would be brought back to the committee.

In response to a query regarding the difference in tariffs and whether they could be increased yearly, it was explained that the tariffs had been inherited from the old district councils.

If tariffs were reduced, the Authority could be open to challenge and the Licensing Manager was not aware of any other authorities who had reduced their tariffs.

In respect of the wheelchair accessibility cars, there were no extra charges.

The Business Compliance and Public Safety Unit Manager advised that officers would produce a set a set of proposals and price increases in order to unify a price structure across the county for member's approval before consultation.

RESOLVED that officers compile a set of proposals and prices to unify the price structure across the county and present to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee for approval before consultation.

CHAIR:

DATE: