

## **EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 13 January 2015

Present

Councillor: K Carter (Chairman)

Councillors: J Onslow (Vice-Chairman), D Ashcroft, R Ayer, L Evans, M Harvey, M Johnson MBE, A Muldoon and D Phillips

### **7 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors A Glass, B Moulard, R Saunders, I Thomas and C Wherrell.

### **8 Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

### **9 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **10 Charges for Taxi and Private Hire Licensing for 2015/2016**

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the report and confirmed that there had been a letter of objection from Mr Steve Amey, the owner of two local taxi companies, to the proposed fees agreed by the committee on 21 November 2014. This objection had been received out of time, which is why it had not been included within the report.

Upon hearing the objection, which centred on the proposed increase of driver renewals, the committee agreed to take the objection into consideration during the debate. The Licensing Team Leader confirmed that whilst it was proposed that driver renewals be increased, the renewal cost for vehicles would be reduced. The Licensing Team Leader confirmed that this operator would save money if the proposed fares were agreed.

During the debate the committee was assured that a robust process had taken place to arrive at the proposed charges, which aimed to recover the actual costs of providing the service. The Licensing Team Leader confirmed that the charges would be reviewed annually.

The committee took into consideration the fact that only one objection had been received and asked that a letter be sent to Mr Amey operator outlining the methodology that had been used in arriving at the charges and explaining that on balance, he would save money.

The committee voted on the proposed charges for Taxi and Private Hire Licensing for the financial year 2015/2016.

Following the vote, the recommendation was declared **CARRIED**, 9 Councillors voting **FOR** the recommendation, no Councillors voting **AGAINST** the recommendation and no Councillors **ABSTAINING** from voting.

Therefore it was **RESOLVED** that the charges shown in Appendix 1 of the report, approved by the Licensing Committee on 21 November 2014 for consultation, be implemented for the financial year commencing 1 April 2015.

#### **11 Proposed Addition of a Booking Fee to the Table of Hackney Carriage Fares**

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the report, which requested that the committee considered the option of including a booking fee on the table of fares and in which circumstances the fee might apply. The notion of adding a booking fee had resulted from an investigation following a complaint that an operator had quoted a booking fee for a customer who lived some distance from the operator's base. The resulting investigation had shown that this illegal practice had potentially been carried out by a number of operators, which perhaps suggested that there was a need for a booking fee.

The report contained the results of the consultation that had been conducted with members of the Hackney Carriage trade. 21 responses from a possible total of 50 had been received, 19 of whom supported the principle of a booking fee. The report also summarised eight suggestions of what amount the fee could be and in what circumstances it could be applied.

The committee discussed the principle of applying a booking fee and taking into account that all Hackney Carriage Fares were discretionary, on balance felt that the inclusion of a booking fee would be reasonable. The committee was keen that Hackney Carriage drivers received a fair deal, however, a concern was raised that only 19 out of 50 possible respondents had supported a booking fee. It was felt that the lack of response from the majority of operators might indicate that they were happy with the current charging schedule that did not include a booking fee.

The committee voted on the principle of including a booking fee on the table of Hackney Carriage fares.

Following a vote, it was resolved that a booking fee be included on the table of Hackney Carriage fares, 7 Councillors voting **FOR** a booking fee, 1 Councillor voting **AGAINST** a booking fee and 1 Councillor **ABSTAINING** from voting.

The committee discussed how much the fee should be and when it should be applied. In order to ensure that enforcement action could be taken if required, the committee felt that the wording and application of the fee should be kept as simple as possible. With this in mind, the committee was concerned that specifying variable rate charges from an operators base could cause confusion. The committee also urged that, should an operator decide to charge the booking fee, the customer be informed of the fee at the time of booking.

The committee considered the fees proposed by members of the trade, but noted that only three of the 16 local authorities in the area used as a

benchmark had a booking fee, including rural authorities such as New Forest District Council.

The Chairman summed up the discussion and proposed that the wording of the fee be as follows: '£3.00 for pre-booked journeys'.

The committee voted on the Chairman's proposal.

Following the vote, the proposal was declared **CARRIED**, 8 Councillors voting **FOR** the proposal, 1 Councillor voting **AGAINST** the proposal and no Councillors **ABSTAINING** from voting.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the following booking fee be added to the Hackney Carriage Table of Fares: '£3 for pre-booked journeys'

## **12 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that the press and the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item as:-

- (i) it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Local Government Act 1972; and
- (ii) in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

The report to be considered was exempt under Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial affairs or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

## **13 Licensing Act 2003 - Appeal of Licensing Sub-Committee Decision of 19 August 2014 Regarding Review of a Premises Licence at: Headley Park Hotel, Lithuanian House, Picketts Hill, Sleaford, Bordon, Hampshire, GU35 8TE**

The Licensing Team Leader introduced the report, which updated the committee on the progress of the appeal against the decision of the Licensing Sub-Committee with regard to the review of the Premises Licence of Headley Park Hotel.

Following the discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the report be **NOTED**.

**The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.33 pm**

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Chairman