

REGULATORY PANEL

WEDNESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2011 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Morton (Chairman), Councillors Cape, Layden, Mrs Parsons, Mrs Robson, Scarborough (as substitute for Councillor Wilson), Stothard (as substitute for Councillor Bell), Mrs Vasey and Whalen

ALSO

PRESENT: Mr B Hodgson – Carlisle Taxi Association

RP.69/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bell, Ms Franklin, Mrs Warwick and Wilson

RP.70/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted at the meeting.

RP.71/11 REVIEW OF CHARGES 2012/13 - LICENSING

The Licensing Manager submitted report GD.57/11 setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Licensing Section of the Governance Directorate.

The Licensing Manager reported that the Corporate Charging Policy, which was part of the Strategic Financial Framework approved by the Executive and full Council on 30 August and 13 September 2011 respectively, set out the City Council's policy for reviewing charges.

He added that it was recognised that licence fees (that could be determined by local authorities) could only be set at a level which recovered the cost of administration, inspection and enforcement of the licensing authorities, arising out of carrying out their licensing functions under the various legislation.

For the financial year 2012/13, that would mean that the corporate target for income generation was 3.8%. It was, however, still Council policy to maximise charges wherever possible and that should be the case when setting charges. For licensing income that would equate to a target increase of £3,400 on 2011/12 budgets.

The Licensing Manager cautioned that licensing income levels could be subject to market forces out with the Council's overall control, including new responsibilities and the repeal of other legislation. In previous years shortfalls in income projections for certain services were encountered, which reinforced the message that any practice of simple annual increments in charges in line with the rate of inflation was inappropriate, as was a copycat approach that compared prices with other authorities without taking into account other local factors, demand and the achievement of Council priorities. He added that the full range of factors identified in the guidance must be taken into account when setting charges with the overall aim of achieving target income levels.

In addition the Policy recognised that each Directorate was different and required Assistant Directors to develop specific principles for their particular service or client groups, but within the parameters of the three main principles.

The Licensing Manager then outlined for Members the summary of income generated and the proposed increases to vehicle and Miscellaneous licences, as detailed within his report.

RESOLVED – That the fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Licensing Section of the Governance Directorate, as set out in Appendices A and B to Report GD.57/11, be agreed with effect from 1 February 2012.

RP.72/11 HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE CCTV REQUIREMENTS

The Licensing Officer submitted report GD.59/11 concerning Hackney Carriage and Private Hire CCTV requirements.

He outlined the background to the matter, commenting that on 2 July 2003 the Licensing and Regulatory Panel had approved new guidelines for the installation of CCTV in taxis and private hire vehicles. At that time only London regulated that type of equipment and much of the content of the Council's guidance document was adopted from the London model.

London's conditions were, however, very restrictive and were drawn up in the main in relation to the traditional "black cab". Very few systems could actually meet their requirements and those that did cost in excess of £500, with a further £100 installation cost each time a vehicle was exchanged. As a result less than ten taxis had taken up that option since inception of the scheme.

The Licensing Officer reported that technology had advanced rapidly since 2003 and systems designed for saloon taxis as well as black cabs were now available for £200. Accordingly, in association with the Carlisle Taxi Association, it was decided in 2010 to carry out a trial of suitable cameras. The Licensing Office had therefore co-ordinated a six month trial of state of the art CCTV systems in Hackney Carriages, details of which were provided.

The Licensing Officer informed Members that Mr Hodgson, a participating driver, was in attendance to provide feedback or respond to any questions they may have. A vehicle was also available for inspection by the Panel.

Members' attention was further drawn to the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire CCTV Requirements appended to his report.

In conclusion, the Licensing Officer recommended that, as a result of the trial and following feedback from users, the Council's guidelines on the installation of that type of equipment be amended.

RESOLVED – That the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire CCTV Requirements, as appended to Report GD.59/11, be adopted.

(The meeting ended at 2.09 pm)