



LICENSING COMMITTEE

4.00 p.m. - 4.35 p.m.

30 September 2010

Present: Councillors Ramsay (vice-chair), Altman, Banham, Blower, Jeraj, Thomas and Stephenson

Apologies: Councillors Driver (chair), Dylan, George, Hooke, Lay

1. PETITION

Mr Ian Clodd and Mr Steve Royal introduced and presented the following petition:-

"We the undersigned believe that the Norwich city council has a responsibility to cab drivers to ensure that they are able to earn a reasonable living. Due the council's de-regulation of license plates, the situation has passed saturation point, and we ask them to review their policy, to enable both drivers and customers to have a better standard of service."

Mr Clodd added that the recommendation from the Department of Transport was that there should be a minimum of 1.1 cabs and a maximum of 2.2 cabs per 1000 people. He said Norwich had 2.5 cabs per 1000 people.

Mr Royal referred to the amount of taxi ranks available in the City. The senior licensing officer said there were currently a minimum of 28 full time and 57 part time spaces excluding the ones at the railway station and airport which was private land. He said the licensing committee did not have the authority to address the issue and that the matter should be referred to the Norwich highways agency committee (NHAC).

Councillor Adrian Ramsay, vice chair responded to the petition as follows:-

"Thank you, Mr Clodd and Mr Royal, for presenting this petition to the licensing committee. As vice chair of the committee I will give an initial response on the issue. The council's current policy of not placing a restriction on the number of hackney carriage licenses in the city is based on national Government guidance from the Department of Transport. However, this issue has not been considered by councillors on the current licensing committee. Having spoken to the Chair of this committee, I have asked council officers to prepare a report on the issue for our next meeting, when councillors can consider whether the policy should be changed. Councillors will need to consider the interests of existing and potential hackney drivers and of the generic public. I have asked officers to seek views and evidence in writing in advance of the meeting from representatives of drivers and of consumer

interests. 'You and other representatives of interest groups will also be very welcome to attend that meeting and address the committee. The meeting will take place on Thursday 11 November at 4:30pm at City Hall and will be open to the public.'

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) agree that a report on the matter be prepared in consultation with Mr Clodd, Mr Royal, the Chair and vice-chair of the Committee, the council's legal department and council officers to be brought back to committee for further consideration on 11 November 2010;
- (2) ask Mr Clodd and Mr Royal to provide further information and evidence to the senior licensing officer by Wednesday 27 October 2010;
- (3) ask the committee officer to provide Mr Clodd and Mr Royal with the date of the next NHAC meeting for the issue of allocation of taxi rank spaces.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2010.

3. LICENCE AND REGISTRATION FEES

The senior licensing officer presented the report and asked members to consider the increase where applicable and the level of fees payable for those licences administered by the council's licensing section.

The senior licensing officer explained how the fees were categorised under three headings. He said the council were unable to generate income from licence fees and they were used for the costs of operating the licensing service. The increased fees had been prepared in conjunction with the head of finance and the suggested 5% increase would come into effect on 1 November 2010 where applicable.

In response to questions the senior licensing officer said if an acupuncture business was ran from a private residence then it would constitute as a premises licence. He also explained the difference between family entertainment centres and adult gaming centres.

The senior licensing officer confirmed that as we were halfway through the financial year the increased fees would not apply retrospectively and would commence from 1 November 2010. The 5% increase was calculated by the heads of both citywide services and finance by looking at the cost of running the licensing service and would form part of the recharge to the licensing budget. It was calculated on the estimated time and cost of processing a licence and the annual increase in the cost of staff in terms of salaries, national insurance and pension contributions.

The senior licensing officer said in comparison with other councils in the vicinity it had been found that it was common practice to increase fees. Those local authorities who were in more rural locations had a greater increase in fees as their premises were more spread out. He said not all councils operated their licensing service in the

same way and subsequently fees could vary accordingly. Norwich city council had a policy that prospective taxi drivers had to undertake a knowledge test and driving assessment when they applied for a licence, which was not the case for all other licensing authorities.

He said that were certain licences and permits for which there was no statutory power to charge a fee and that the increase in the discretionary fee licenses could not be used to recover the costs of the work undertaken to process these non-chargeable matters.

The senior licensing officer explained that the total income figures for 2010/2011 as shown in Appendix A were estimated figures and not total amounts. The figures were lower than the year before as they reflected that the council was halfway through the financial year with fewer applications. Periods such as Christmas would see an increase in the amount of hackney carriage and private hire applications.

In response for clarification, the senior licensing officer explained how the charge for a Sex Establishment licence was calculated and said it was high due to the amount of work undertaken across multiple departments of the council.

RESOLVED unanimously to approve the fees as detailed in the column headed 'Recommendation Charge' of Appendix A of the report.

4. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) note that the date of the next meeting is to be held on Thursday 11 November 2010 at 4:30pm;
- (2) note the error listed on the agenda of the date of the March 2011 meeting and note that the subsequent meeting will take place on Thursday 10 March 2011 at 4:30pm.

CHAIR