

Runnymede Borough Council

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

13 November 2018 at 7.38pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors Mrs J Gracey (Chairman), S A Lewis (Vice-Chairman), D A Cotty, Mrs M T Harnden and Ms A Shepperdson.

Members of the Committee absent: None.

With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor N W Rubidge also attended the meeting.

349 FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Committee noted the Fire Precautions.

350 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 September 2018 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

351 REGULATORY FEES AND CHARGES 2019/20

The Committee's approval was sought for the proposed fees and charges for 2019/20. The service areas included everything relating to taxi licensing, gambling and other regulatory functions.

Officers had carefully reviewed the current fee setting structure and re-allocated some Officer time to taxi licensing to reflect the amount of time the Senior Licensing Officer devoted to that area of work. As a result the estimated deficit was approximately £22,000 for 2019/20, of which £11,000 was for non-rechargeable costs. The rationale was to charge fees that were an accurate correlation with the actual cost of the service. Therefore, despite there being a deficit, the renewal fee for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers' licences had been reduced because the requirement to conduct 'right to work' checks under the Immigration Act 2016 had been fulfilled for existing drivers and now only applied to new drivers. This represented a reduction of approximately £24.00. [since confirmed as £18.00]

Members commended the diligence applied by the Senior Licensing Officer to setting fees which it was agreed were transparent, clear and fair, noting that if any objections to the fees were received when advertised they would be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee in January 2019.

Members were concerned that fewer drivers were licensed and driving in Runnymede, which it was thought was largely attributable to more Uber and similar drivers working in the borough, but not licensed by the Council. Members were keen to support local businesses and asked Officers to look at ways of promoting the borough's local Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Services in consultation with the Council's Communications team.

RESOLVED that –

the proposed fees and charges be approved, to be effective from the dates within the appendix or as soon as practical thereafter

352 HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES REVIEW

The Committee was asked to review the results of a recent consultation on whether to make any changes to Hackney Carriage fares for 2019/20.

The Council had last increased Hackney Carriage fares in 2014. This amounted to an increase of 5.5% in the pull off rate, 3.84% for the second mile, 4.76% for subsequent miles and no increase in waiting time. Members reviewed the full set of fares as set out in the appendix to the report.

Officers reported that in January 2018, a small number of drivers had requested a review of the fares. Therefore, the trade had been consulted and given a period of 3 months in which to respond. Only 14 drivers had submitted views; of these only 4 favoured an increase. This view was reflected at the recent Taxi Forum, where drivers regretted that any increase, although needed, was likely to price them out of the market when compared with Uber and similar operators.

The Committee acknowledged the other factors which Officers had taken into account, including inflation, fuel prices, the consumer price index, insurance and servicing costs and concurred there was no justification to increase fares at this time. It was noted that as fares were not changing this year, there was no need to re-advertise.

Officers undertook to monitor the situation and review when necessary.

RESOLVED that –

Hackney Carriage fare tariffs remain unchanged for 2019/20.

353 GAMBLING POLICY – THREE YEARLY REVIEW

The Committee's approval was sought to recommend to full Council that the revised Gambling Policy 2019 – 2022 be adopted and that delegated authority be given to the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager and the Senior Licensing Officer to make any non-substantive administrative amendments to the policy without recourse to the Regulatory Committee. It was further recommended that in future, the policy would not be subject to the approval of full Council, in line with other policies relating to regulatory matters. This would require a minor amendment to the Council's Constitution.

The Council's Gambling Policy had been in force since 2007 and was updated every three years, the most recent version being 2015 – 30 January 2019. The Committee had approved revisions to the Policy at its meeting in June 2018 which had then been subject to public consultation for a period of three months. The revised policy had met with no objections and one positive statement from Gosschalks Solicitors who were in favour of the Council's light touch approach to the gambling regime.

The main change to the existing policy was the inclusion of a Local Area Profile and information relating to the operators Local Risk Assessment. These placed an emphasis on the operator having suitable policies and procedures in place which took into account the local demographic and which took active steps to mitigate any identified risks. Based on updated guidance from the Gambling Commission, Officers had drafted a more informative policy which Members agreed was sound and well equipped to promote the licensing objectives as well as support responsible local businesses.

Officers advised that the policy sufficiently covered Equalities considerations, with particular emphasis on the protection of children and young people. Members agreed and asked Officers to find out from Trading Standards whether there were any reported incidents or known issues with children and young people involved in gambling in the borough.

The Committee noted the Government's proposal to enforce a reduction in the maximum stake on fixed-odds betting terminals. If enacted, Officers would review and amend the policy accordingly.

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL that –

- i) the revised Gambling Policy 2019 – 2022 be approved; and**
- ii) the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager and Senior Licensing Officer be authorised to make any subsequent non-substantive administrative amendments to the Policy.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8pm)