

Runnymede Borough Council

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 6 November 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors E Kettle (Chair), M Singh (Vice-Chair), MK Cressey, S Eldridge, K Graham, M Harnden, A King, K Lee, I Mullens and P Tucker-Brown.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor D Clarke.

6 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 June 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

7 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Clarke.

8 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

9 Licensing Proposed Fees and Charges 2025-26

The Committee's approval was sought for the proposed fees and charges for the services provided under the Licensing Act 2003. All of the fees and charges apart from the pre-application fees, which had been introduced from 1 April 2024, were set by statute and could not be altered to recover the full cost of running the service. Therefore, Members only had discretion to alter the pre-application advice charges which it was noted had been set on a full cost recovery basis in line with advice from colleagues in Finance.

It was acknowledged that only one other neighbouring local authority in Surrey appeared to offer a pre-application advice service, and their fees were thought to be more expensive than the proposed fee. [Subsequently, Officers found that only the 1 hour advice service was equivalent to the other local authority's current fees] It was also noted that to obtain advice from a specialist licensing solicitor or consultant would cost the applicant a considerable amount more than the proposed charges. Officers were asked to consider a wider benchmarking exercise with regard to the pre-application fees and to supply the Committee with some data from other Councils other than those in Surrey which Officers were confident would demonstrate the proposed fees were good value for money.

There was a level of frustration that because the statutory fees had not been increased since their introduction, the service was carrying a running deficit, currently estimated to be £25,900 for 2025/26. It was discussed whether this was a sum that could be 'written off'. It was also suggested that it might be a timely moment for further lobbying through the Local Government Association; this could also be carried out by elected Members.

The Committee was content to approve the proposed fees and charges accordingly.

Resolved that –

The proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix A of the report, be approved,

to be effective from the dates within the Appendix or as soon as practical thereafter

10 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no exempt or confidential items on the agenda.

(The meeting ended at 7.48 pm.)

Chairman