

Runnymede Borough CouncilRegulatory CommitteeTuesday, 8 November 2022 at 7.40 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors J Wilson (Chairman), E Gill (Vice-Chairman), T Burton and S Saise-Marshall.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors J Broadhead.

In attendance: Councillors .

308 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

309 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Broadhead.

310 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest to record, other than those already declared by Members of the Committee on their main register of interests.

311 Regulatory Fees and Charges 2023-2024

The Committee was asked to approve the various fees and charges under the remit of the Regulatory Committee, some of which were set in statute, others could be determined locally.

Members noted that setting the fees was the subject of a rigorous regime which had been in place since 2014. The process involved seven elements. These were application processing, consumables, administration, medical reports for drivers only, monitoring compliance or enforcement, hackney carriage rank rental cost and hackney carriage fare setting and advertising. Officers calculated the cost of each element which resulted in the recommended fees.

The Committee noted that the current deficit for taxi licensing was approximately £86,000 for 2023/2024. However, £10,600 represented non-rechargeable costs. The reduction in the number of drivers and vehicles, mainly owing to competition from app based companies, explained the significant drop in income. In 2017 the Council had licensed 228 drivers and 208 vehicles. By contrast these had fallen to 92 drivers and 79 vehicles in 2022. Officers were asked to calculate how much per resident the current deficit on taxi licensing was covering.

Officers explained that the Council's costs had to be deemed reasonable in all aspects but that full cost recovery was an option should Members wish to consider this in the future. This would be subject to obtaining legal advice and would need to be approved by the full Council as a major policy change which could have a negative effect on the taxi trade.

The Committee agreed that on average Runnymede's fees and charges compared favourably with other boroughs, all of whom had different ways of determining their fees.

Members reviewed a series of statistical data, and appreciated the activity based costing approach taken by Officers. It was agreed to provide the Committee with some of the slides after the meeting so they could better understand the background. This also demonstrated the transparency of the fee setting process.

Members discussed other ways in which the service could reduce costs, assist drivers and encourage new drivers to apply. It was observed that no economies of scale were currently being achieved. Some on-costs (including a number of internal re-charges) were considered excessive, others such as the legislative requirement to advertise fees in a local newspaper were significantly expensive.

It was noted that in other service areas, particularly Community Services, shared services were an option to reduce cost. However, Members agreed it was prudent to await a steer from central government before pursuing this. Officers agreed to submit a report on future options for service delivery, different fee levels and their financial implications to a future meeting of the Committee.

The issue of rank provision was discussed, noting that despite the efforts of Members and Officers none had been made for the Magna Square development in Egham. This was very disappointing. The Committee sought to continue pursuing options for additional ranks in the borough, and Officers agreed to submit a report to a future meeting, subject to suitable locations becoming available or being identified.

The app based companies were discussed; including the practice of surge pricing, making them, at times, more expensive than using local firms. However, the sheer volume of app based drivers were having a detrimental effect on the local trade.

In respect of other Regulatory related fees, Officers were asked to confirm why the Caravan Site licensing fees had not increased in 2023/24. Regarding Pavement Licensing, Officers advised that more resource in the form of enforcement would be needed to fully monitor how businesses operated within this regime. Owing to legislative delay a report on this would now be presented in min 2023.

RESOLVED that –

The proposed fees and charges, as set out in Appendix ‘A’ of the agenda be approved, to be effective from the dates in the appendix, or as soon as practical thereafter.

312 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There were no confidential or exempt items on the agenda.

(The meeting ended at 8.43 pm.)

Chairman