

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Taxis Committee
Wednesday 15th February 2023 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley**

Present:

Councillor A Hopwood (Chair)
Councillor B Challenor (Vice-Chair)
Councillors M Aston, S Bothul, P Drake, D Harley, P Lee and J Martin.

Officers:

S Smith (Team Manager (Licensing and Waste Enforcement)), N Slym (Assistant Team Manager (Licensing and Waste Enforcement)), S Ahmed-Aziz (Solicitor) and K Taylor (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance:

I Grosvenor (Finance Manager) and R Millard (Senior Principal Accountant) for Agenda Item No. 5 – Revision of Licence Fees.

82 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R Body, A Lees and W Sullivan.

83 Appointment of Substitute Members

It was reported that Councillors S Bothul and P Drake had been appointed to serve as substitute Members for Councillors W Sullivan and R Body, respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

84 Declarations of interest

No Member made a declaration of interest, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, in respect of any matters considered at the meeting.

85 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January, 2023, be approved as a correct record and signed.

86 **Revision of Licence Fees**

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted on the revision of fees for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage licences administered by the Committee.

The Team Manager (Licensing and Waste Enforcement) presented the report in detail referring Members to paragraphs of specific importance.

The Finance Manager outlined the proposed budget for 2023/24 and confirmed that the projected budget had been calculated based on a 0% uplift to charges, inflationary increases for salaries being built in and operational efficiencies targeted to partly mitigate any potential impact.

It was noted that over the last three year cycle a surplus of £10,000 had been forecasted, excluding 2021/2022, during that period income levels had been consistent. The draft budget for 2023/24 reflected the costs and income budgets set in 2018/19 and therefore efficiencies had been generated to offset the rise in inflation over the five-year period and were outlined in the report submitted.

During 22/23, the volume of driving licence renewals, new vehicle applications, and vehicle test appointments had steadily risen and were projected to achieve or exceed levels identified in 2019/20. It was noted that new driver licence applications were already above 2019/20 levels, giving officers confidence that next year projected income should meet any additional inflationary increases.

The Finance Manager referred to specific detail in relation to the administration of the Licensing Service, including staffing costs, training and advertising. It was noted that an additional £99,000 had been incurred in comparison to the previous year resulting from the implementation of the pay award to employees across the Council, and a salary regrading exercise.

In concluding, the Team Manager (Licensing and Waste Enforcement) confirmed that he had received notification on behalf of the Taxi Association expressing their support of the recommendation by officers, as outlined in paragraph 2 of the report submitted, for the no increase in fees.

Resolved

That no action be taken to increase the fees for private hire and hackney carriage licences administered by the Committee, with effect from 1st April 2023.

87 Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8

88 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to an individual(s) as defined under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

89 Change in Order of Business

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 1(c), it was:-

Resolved

That the order of business be varied and the agenda items be considered in the order set out in the minutes below.

90 Application for Grant of a Private Hire Driver's Licence – Mr NN

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted to consider the application for the grant of a private hire driver's licence to Mr NN.

Mr NN was in attendance at the meeting, together with his Solicitor, Mr AS.

Mr AS made detailed representations on behalf of his client in support of his application, and responded to questions raised by Members in relation to his previous convictions as outlined in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report submitted. It was noted that Mr NN had previously applied for the grant of a private hire and hackney carriage driver's licence in 2014, where the Committee resolved that the application be refused. Mr NN had also previously applied to Wolverhampton City Council in 2017 for the grant of a licence which was also refused.

Mr NN confirmed that there were no further matters pending that needed to be brought to the Committee's attention.

The Solicitor provided legal advice in relation to the case, following which all parties withdrew from the meeting to enable the Committee to determine the application.

Resolved

That following careful consideration of the information contained in the report submitted, the evidence provided at the meeting and having regard to the Committee Guidelines and Statutory Standards, the Committee determined that although more than ten years had passed since the 2010 conviction, they did not consider Mr NN to be a fit and proper person in view of the circumstances surrounding his previous convictions, therefore the application to grant a Private Hire Driver's Licence to Mr NN, be refused.

Mr NN was informed of his right to appeal the decision.

91 **Application for Review of a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence – Mr IH**

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted to consider the review of the Hackney Carriage driver's licence issued to Mr IH.

Mr IH was in attendance at the meeting together with his wife and explained the circumstances surrounding the endorsements on his Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) mandate, as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, and responded to questions asked by the Committee.

Mr IH confirmed that there were no further matters pending that needed to be brought to the Committee's attention.

The Solicitor provided legal advice in relation to the case, following which all parties withdrew from the meeting to enable the Committee to determine the application.

Resolved

That following careful consideration of the information contained in the report submitted, the evidence provided at the meeting and having regard to the Committee Guidelines and Statutory Standards, the Committee determined that given the explanation provided, they were satisfied that Mr IH was a fit and proper person and a warning be issued regarding his future conduct.

92 **Application for Review of a Private Hire Driver's Licence – Mr SB**

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted to consider the review of the private hire driver's licence issued to Mr SB.

Mr SB was in attendance at the meeting together with his translator, Mr TM who explained the circumstances surrounding the convictions outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, and responded to questions asked by the Committee on behalf of Mr SB.

Mr SB confirmed that there were no further matters pending that needed to be brought to the Committee's attention.

The Solicitor provided legal advice in relation to the case, following which all parties withdrew from the meeting to enable the Committee to determine the application.

Resolved

That following careful consideration of the information contained in the report submitted, the evidence provided at the meeting and having regard to the Committee Guidelines and Statutory Standards, the Committee determined that the Private Hire Driver's Licence issued to Mr SB be suspended for two months in view of his convictions for plying for hire and having no insurance.

Mr SB was informed of his right to appeal the decision.

93 **Application for Grant of a Private Hire Driver's Licence – Mr MAN**

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted to consider the application for the grant of a private hire driver's licence to Mr MAN.

Mr MAN was in attendance at the meeting and made representations in support of his application, and responded to questions raised by Members in relation to his previous conviction as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted.

Mr MAN confirmed that there were no further matters pending that needed to be brought to the Committee's attention.

The Solicitor provided legal advice in relation to the case, following which all parties withdrew from the meeting to enable the Committee to determine the application.

Resolved

That following careful consideration of the information contained in the report submitted, the evidence provided at the meeting and having regard to the Committee Guidelines and Statutory Standards, the Committee determined that given the explanation provided, they were satisfied that Mr MAN was a fit and proper person, therefore, the Private Hire Driver's Licence be granted.

94 Application for Grant of a Private Hire Driver's Licence – Mr NH

A report of the Interim Director of Environment was submitted to consider the grant of a private hire driver's licence to Mr NH.

Mr NH was in attendance at the meeting and made representations in support of his application, and responded to questions raised by Members in relation to the conviction outlined in paragraph 3 of the report submitted.

Mr NH confirmed that there were no further matters pending that needed to be brought to the Committee's attention.

The Solicitor provided legal advice in relation to the case, following which all parties withdrew from the meeting to enable the Committee to determine the application.

Resolved

That following careful consideration of the information contained in the report submitted, the evidence provided at the meeting and having regard to the Committee Guidelines and Statutory Standards, the Committee determined that, subject to satisfactory drug testing, the Private Hire Drivers Licence be granted to Mr NH.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm.

CHAIR