

South Somerset District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Licensing Committee (Informal)** held by video-conference using Zoom meeting software **on Tuesday 14 June 2022.**

(10.00 - 10.29 am)

Present:

Members: Councillor Wes Read (Chairman)

Jason Baker	Wes Read
Adam Dance	Paul Rowsell
Karl Gill	Martin Wale
Kevin Messenger	William Wallace

Officers

Rachel Lloyd	Specialist (Licensing)
Michelle Mainwaring	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)
Jo Morris	Case Officer (Strategy & Support Services)

Note: All decisions were approved without dissent unless shown otherwise.

1. Minutes (Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 11th January 2022 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

2. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dave Bulmer, Tony Lock, Crispin Raikes, David Recardo and Andy Soughton.

3. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Public Participation at Committees (Agenda Item 4)

Members noted that the applicant for Item 9 – Permission to apply for a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence would address the Committee at the time the item was discussed.

There were no other members of the public present at the meeting.

5. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 5)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Licensing Committee would be held on Tuesday 13th September 2022 at 10.00am.

6. Taxi Fare Review (Agenda Item 6)

The Specialist – Licensing presented the report as set out in the agenda. She explained that the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provided the power to set fares charged by hackney carriage drivers and that the last review of hackney carriage fares took place in 2016. Due to increasing fuel and vehicle operating costs, several drivers had requested that SSDC review the fares.

The Specialist – Licensing referred to the proposed fares set out in Appendix 2 to the report and the formula used for setting the fares which was previously agreed by the Licensing Committee in April 2016. She explained that the proposed fares had been sent to hackney carriage vehicle licence holders to let them know that a review was to take place and to seek their views on the proposals but a further full consultation would take place. She referred to the comments received as outlined in the report and the comparison chart with neighbouring authorities.

Members were being asked to agree the proposed fares and for consultation on the fares to take place. The Specialist – Licensing said that the Equality Impact Assessment identified the need to carry out a greater level of consultation than the legislation required to ensure that people who are likely to be impacted by changes to fares are aware and have the opportunity to comment, therefore a 28 day consultation period was proposed.

In response to questions, the Specialist – Licensing confirmed that:

- The legislation stated that consultation should take place for a minimum of 14 days but in order to make as many people aware as possible 28 days was being proposed.
- There was a balance between ensuring that taxi operators meet their costs and being able to run their business and people not being disproportionately affected by the cost of living increase.
- Comments received during the consultation period would be brought back to the Licensing Committee to be discussed.

During the discussion on the item, members made the following comments:

- In view of keeping hackney carriage vehicle drivers on the road and serving the public there was an urgent need for the fares to be agreed.
- Support for the consultation period to take place for the minimum period of 14 days which would be fair to both sides.
- Noted the comments from Hackney Carriage Vehicles Licence Holders but did not support the suggestion of rate 2 being used for larger vehicles.

At the conclusion of the debate members felt that the consultation period should take place for 14 days on the proposed fares outlined in Appendix 2 of the report.

RESOLVED: That the Licensing Committee recommend to the Chief Executive:

1. That consultation on the proposed hackney carriage fares outlined in Appendix 2 of the report take place for 14 days.
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 2. That any responses received during the consultation period be brought back to a future meeting of the Licensing Committee.
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7. Appointment of Chairmen for Licensing Sub Committees (Agenda Item 7)

Members considered the report and recommended members to be appointed as Licensing Sub Committee Chairmen for the municipal year 2022/23.

RESOLVED: That the Licensing Committee recommend that the Chief Executive appoint the following members as Licensing Sub Committee Chairmen for 2022/23: Councillors Jason Baker, Crispin Raikes, Wes Read, David Recardo and Martin Wale.

8. Exclusion of the Press and Public (Agenda Item 8)

RESOLVED: That Agenda Item 9 be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under paragraph 1: "Information relating to any individual for, or recipient or form recipient of any service provided by the authority." It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption from the Access to Information Rules outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

9. Permission to Apply for a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence (Confidential) (Agenda Item 9)

This item was considered in closed session.

The Specialist - Licensing presented the report.

The Committee was addressed by the applicant who explained the reason for his request.

Members considered the request and agreed that exceptional circumstances had been demonstrated in this case and therefore recommended that the applicant be permitted to apply for a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence contrary to paragraph 3.13 of the South Somerset District Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

RESOLVED: That the Licensing Committee recommend to the Chief Executive that the applicant be permitted to apply for a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence contrary to paragraph 3.13 of the South Somerset District Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

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Chairman