

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 15 July 2008

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: P.D. Kissane (Chair), C. Latif (Vice Chair), L. Knight, John Lloyd, CC, Lin Martin-Haugh, M. Notley, J. Pickersgill, L. Strange, P. Stuart, and Brian Underwood.

Agenda Item:

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In Attendance:

Start/End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.28pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence had been received on behalf of Councillors M. Cherney-Craw, P. Gallagher, L. Strange and J.Thomas

Councillor J. Pickersgill had advised the Committee that he would be late and joined the meeting at 6.25pm.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair advised the meeting that there would be a change to the order of business and agenda item 5, 'Tariff Increase' would be taken first.

With the agreement of the Chair, copies of the Part I Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 12 February 2008 were distributed at the meeting.

The Chair then invited Members of the Committee and Officers to introduce themselves to the representatives from the Taxi trade.

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee considered the Terms of Reference for the General Purposes Committee, as at Appendix F to the report.

It was RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference for the General Purposes Committee be noted.

3 REVIEW OF STREET TRADING SCHEME

The Committee considered a report that sought agreement to proposals for changes

to the street trading regime, prior to the consultation period.

The Committee was advised that the purpose of the proposed revisions was to take account of housing and other development that had arisen in the intervening years since the scheme was first devised in 1982. Additionally, there was a need to secure peripheral areas adjacent to leisure facilities from opportunistic trading.

The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing went through the report and highlighted the reasons for the proposed changes. The list of proposed changes, maps of the neighbourhoods and the scheme as a whole were appended to the report.

A formal consultation and notification process would be undertaken, which would include consultation with existing consent holders and the publication of a Public Notice in the local newspaper giving details of the proposals. The proposals would also be advertised at the Customer Service Centre, circulated to Area Committee Chairs and to Neighbourhood Action Teams.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the proposals for changes to the street trading regime as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed;
2. That formal consultation regarding the proposed modification of the Street Trading regime be undertaken;
3. That the matter return to a future meeting of the General Purposes Committee following the statutory consultation period for final consideration.

4 REVIEW OF TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCE CONDITIONS

The Committee considered revisions to the existing conditions of licensing for taxis, private hire vehicles, drivers and operators as at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee was advised that the conditions were last revised in 2005 and since that time a number of best practice documents had been published. Additionally, a number of suspensions, revocations, prosecutions and appeals against refusal had occurred relating to licensed drivers and operators in Stevenage.

Many of the conditions in the draft document were similar to existing ones but significant changes and additions had been made. As well as the Draft Policy and Conditions, the Existing Conditions were appended to the report for comparison.

The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing went through the report and explained that 'Grandfather Rights' had been awarded to existing licence holders where it was considered that a new condition would have a significant financial impact, for example, requirement for all hackney carriages to be black.

The Chair thanked the Head of Environmental Health and Licensing and her team for the hard work that had taken place to produce the report.

It was RESOLVED::

1. That no additional changes to the draft conditions considered at the meeting

- be made;
2. That the draft conditions be put out for consultation for a minimum of 12 weeks;
 3. That, following the consultation period, the draft conditions be brought back to a further meeting of the General Purposes Committee for further consideration, revision as deemed necessary and adoption.

5 TARIFF INCREASE

The Committee considered a proposal to apply a £0.40p per trip fuel surcharge to the existing Hackney Carriage table of maximum fares. The Committee also considered an objection to the increase that had been received from a member of the public, as at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing explained that as a result of substantial increases in fuel prices since the last amendment to the tariff at the end of February 2008, a request had been received from the taxi trade for an emergency fuel surcharge of £0.40p per trip to be added to the existing Hackney Carriage table of Maximum Fares, as at Appendix 1.

The proposed tariff increase had been advertised in the Comet newspaper on 5 June 2008 and the objection that had been received was read out to the Committee.

The Chair then invited representatives from the taxi trade to speak and they explained the reasons why they had requested the increase.

The Chair then invited the objector to speak and she reiterated her concerns about the proposed increase.

Members of the Committee considered the matter and the various options available to them and agreed that a reduced increase of £0.20p per trip would be appropriate, with the option to increase the amount should fuel prices increase in the future. The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing advised the Committee that the AA Monthly Fuel Guide could be used to monitor fuel costs and that any further increase would have to come back to a future meeting of the Committee.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That an increase of £0.20p per trip fuel surcharge be applied to the Hackney Carriage table of maximum fares as an 'extra';
2. That any further changes to the Hackney Carriage table of maximum fares be brought back to a future meeting of the General Purposes Committee for consideration.

6 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

Noted.

7 MINUTES - 12 February 2008

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes

Committee held on 12 February, 2008, having been circulated be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was RESOLVED that under Secion 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended b y S12006 No. 88.

9 MINUTES - 12 February 2008

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 12 February 2008, having been circulated, be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II business for consideration.