

**EXTRAORDINARY LICENSING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 21 DECEMBER 2009**

Present: Councillor D G Perry – Vice Chairman in the chair.  
Councillors J E Hudson and A D Walters.

Officers in attendance: M Perry (Assistant Chief Executive) and P Snow  
(Committee and Electoral Services Manager).

**LC41 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

Prior to the meeting a statement was made by Mr A Mahoney, a member of the taxi trade. Mr Mahoney said that driver licence fees had risen by 30% two years ago and he had raised at that time the poor accounting procedures which had resulted in the wrong cost base being applied.

There had been a great deal of time and effort in getting to the point reached at this meeting where fees could be reduced. He felt it had been worth the effort as it was now possible to understand the rationale behind the fees being suggested.

In each of the years 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 a surplus had arisen on the licensing service and this was still growing. Agreement had been reached to reduce fees now and to reconsider the position in June 2010 when the end of year figures would be available. The trade was in agreement with that position.

Mr Mahoney felt that any remaining surplus funds should remain within the licensing department and that lower fees should apply in the future, rather than arranging refunds as this would be expensive to administer. He thanked all of those concerned in reaching agreement for their hard work.

**LC42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Bellingham–Smith, E W Hicks, R M Lemon, J I Loughlin, H J Mason, D J Morson and J A Redfern.

**LC43 LICENCE FEES**

The Assistant Chief Executive outlined the history of this issue. At the meeting on 5 March 2009 Members had resolved to increase the license fees for drivers of private hire vehicles to £105 and for Hackney carriages and joint license holders to £115. These increases were advertised but in the light of objections received the Committee had decided not to increase the fees and they remained at £170 per annum for a vehicle and £80 for operators.

Following prolonged discussion on this issue a meeting had been held on 13 November 2009 between the Assistant Chief Executive, the Council's Accountant and representatives of the Trade to clarify the financial situation and to agree a level of fees. The following points had been agreed

- The base line cost to the Council of administering licenses to hackney carriage and private vehicles.
- To avoid costs of advertising the reduction in fees should be targeted to the drivers and not vehicle operators.
- With the current level of licensed vehicles and operators and the income produced from the licenses there was a shortfall of £37,736 to be recovered from drivers.
- To divide that sum by the current number of drivers would produce an annual fee of £60.
- There should be no distinction in fees between hackney carriages or joint licenses and those for private hire vehicles.

The Assistant Chief Executive concluded that he was reluctant to reduce the fees further until the outcome of the financial year 2009/10 was known. He confirmed that the level of fees would be reviewed in June 2010. If agreed by Members, the reduction in fees to £60 could take effect immediately.

Councillor Perry took the view that it should be possible to do more to reduce fees now given the level of surplus of £130k. He suggested that the fee incurred by drivers for obtaining a CRB check should be incorporated into the revised £60 fee.

The Assistant Chief Executive felt that this suggestion would be unfair given that some drivers were licensed for only one year and that CRB checks had to be renewed every three years.

There was further discussion on the merits of agreeing the recommendation to reduce the fee to £60 now as against the suggestion made by Councillor Perry. The discussion incorporated reference to the subject matter of the discussion of the Part 2 report at the meeting on 11 November 2009.

The Assistant Chief Executive explained why it had not been possible to arrange this meeting on an earlier date. This had followed discussions with Mr Drinkwater of ULODA.

Councillor Walters thought that a consensus view had now been reached, whereby a review of fees would take place once the agreed meeting with representatives of the trade had taken place in June next year, and proposed adoption of the recommendation in the report. The nature of those discussions would depend on the year end figures available at that time.

RESOLVED that the fee for licenses for drivers of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles be reduced to £60 per annum with immediate effect.