

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

7TH JANUARY 2008 (10.30AM)

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**PRESENT:**

Councillors: M A Salter (Chairman), Mrs P V Hayward (Vice-Chairman), J-P Champion, S J M Clee, P Dyke, G H Eeles, P B Harrison, M B Kelly, M Price, D R Sheppard, N J Thomas and G C Yarranton.

**OBSERVERS:**

There were no members present as observers.

**LIC. 120 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: B T Glass, Mrs J Greener and Mrs A T Hingley.

**LIC. 121 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES**

The following substitutes were appointed:  
Councillor S J M Clee for Councillor Mrs A T Hingley;  
Councillor N J Thomas for Councillor B T Glass; and  
Councillor G C Yarranton for Councillor Mrs J Greener.

**LIC. 122 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor P Dyke declared a personal interest in Minute LIC 124, Request To Change Detail Contained Within The Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Badge, as he had signed the petition, his brother-in-law being a taxi driver.

Councillor J-P Champion declared a personal interest in Minute LIC. 126, Update From West Mercia Police Licensing Officer, in view of his membership of the West Mercia Police Authority.

**LIC. 123 MINUTES**

**DECISION:**

**The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**LIC. 124     REQUEST TO CHANGE DETAIL CONTAINED WITHIN THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE/PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE DRIVER'S BADGE**

Further to Minute LIC.113 of its 26<sup>th</sup> November 2007 meeting, the Principal Licensing Officer presented a report from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment. This enabled the Committee to give further consideration to a request by Mr R K South, Secretary of the Wyre Forest Taxi Drivers' Association, that a driver's name should not be displayed on the Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Badge issued by the Council. Mr South was not present at the meeting.

The Committee at its 26<sup>th</sup> November 2007 meeting had deferred consideration of the matter to allow members more time to study a survey of hackney carriage/private hire drivers, which Mr South had circulated at the meeting, in support of his request. The survey was appended to the report.

Members gave careful consideration to the contents of the survey and to Mr South's concern that the public could easily trace drivers whose names were included on badges displayed in vehicles and that, as he worked at night, his family could be vulnerable.

The Committee noted that, out of a total of 237 drivers in the District's hackney carriage/private hire fleet, only 98 had signed the petition and, of those, 29 had claimed that incidents had occurred due to the display of their name on the badge. The Committee also noted that no other driver or operator had made representations to the Council, or to a member of the Committee about the display of the name. Hence, members felt that the survey could not be seen as representative of the views of the Wyre Forest taxi trade as a whole.

Members also recognised that, from the public perspective, the display of the driver's name in the vehicle served to protect passengers. They pointed out that a member of the public, who wished to make a complaint, was more likely to remember a name, rather than the four digit reference number that would replace the name if Mr South's request was approved. However, if the driver's name was not displayed, the public could still trace it, by reference to a register that was open to public inspection. Members pointed out that other workers, providing a service to the public, wore name badges.

**DECIDED:**

**The current format of the Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver's Badge containing the full name of the Licence holder be supported, and no recommendation be made to the Cabinet to change this policy for the following reasons:**

- **Public Protection.**
- **Insufficient evidence of problems being caused to hackney carriage/private hire drivers as a result of the inclusion of their names on their badges.**

- **The survey was not representative of the views of the Wyre Forest Taxi trade as a whole.**

**LIC. 125 INCREASE IN FEES AND CHARGES FOR LICENSING, FOOD AND HEALTH AND SAFETY AND POLLUTION CONTROL 2008/2009**

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment in relation to proposed increases in the fees and charges within the Council's Licensing, Food and Health and Safety and Pollution Control functions for 2008/09. A revised Appendix 1 was circulated at the meeting.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager advised that the report referred to a proposed target increase of 3.5% for 2008/09, but since publication, the Cabinet had recommended an increase of 4.5 %. The revised appendix, therefore, detailed the proposed charges for 2008/09 on this basis.

The Leader of the Council clarified that the proposed increase of 4.5% had been recommended by the Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee to apply to fees and charges across the board and that the Licensing and Environmental Committee's recommendation would be considered as part of the Council's budget process.

**RECOMMENDED TO THE CABINET:**

**The proposals for fees and charges within the Council's Licensing, Food and Health and Safety and Pollution Control functions for 2008/2009, as detailed in the revised Appendix 1 to the report, be included in the Cabinet's 2008/2009 budget strategy.**

**LIC. 126 UPDATE FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE LICENSING OFFICER**

At the Chairman's invitation, Police Constable Police Adrian Hewitt, the West Mercia Police Authority Licensing Officer in attendance at the meeting, gave the Committee a verbal update on the situation relating to premises in the District licensed for the sale of alcohol.

He was pleased to report that Christmas 2007 had been the best ever in terms of public behaviour outside public houses in the District. Representatives from the Police and the Council's Licensing Officers had made joint visits to licensed premises on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2007 and this co-operation was very beneficial. The Police hoped to continue to carry out visits to licensed premises from time to time and appreciated the welcome they received from licensees.

Further to the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2007 Licensing Sub-Committee's review of the Old Bear Public House, Stourbridge Road, Kidderminster, PC Hewitt reported that it had been trading under new management for about three weeks without giving the Police cause for concern and the licensee had demonstrated his willingness to work with the Police to this end.

In reply to queries, PC Hewitt advised that, aside from a few complaints about smokers blocking footpaths outside public houses, the smoking ban had not

caused any disorder. He also answered questions about under-age drinking and advised that Tesco had offered the Police access to its CCTV system in this context.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked PC Hewitt for attending the meeting and giving the Committee this informative update.

**LIC. 127 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**DECISION:**

**Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of “Exempt Information” as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

**LIC. 128 MINUTES**

**DECISION:**

**The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

The meeting ended at 10.56 pm.