LICENSING, APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing, Appeals and Complaints Committee of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Wednesday 17 November 2015 at 10.20 am

Committee Members Present:
Councillors D Goldson (Chairman), W Kemp, J Amis, M Dewsbury, C Gould, J Hornby, C Kemp, K Mason Billig, T Palmer, A Pond, J Wilby and K Worsley

Apologies:
Councillors V Bell and P Hardy

Officers in Attendance:
The Licensing, Food & Safety Team Leader (C Coker) and the Licensing and Enforcement Officer (A Cox)

Cabinet Members in Attendance:
Cllr L Hornby

627 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 12 August 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

628 TAXI FEE CONSULTATION UPDATE and LICENCE DURATIONS

The Chairman introduced the report of the Licensing and Enforcement Officer, advising members that the Deregulation Act 2015 had amended previous legislation by extending the length of time a Combined Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver and Private Hire Operator licence remained valid. It was noted that the Council may still grant a licence for a lesser period, depending upon the circumstances of the case.

After a brief discussion, it was agreed that authority to issue lesser duration licences should be delegated to the Director of Growth and Localism.

The Committee considered the review of licence fees as proposed in the report and were advised that, during the consultation, the fee levels had not been questioned by the trade but that there had been several questions which officers felt should be considered by the Committee.

Members considered the suggestion that that the Council should consider issuing a shorter duration licence to drivers who were required to have an annual medical examination due to being over 70 years of age, and agreed that this would be the fairest solution.
The Committee discussed drivers who were new to the industry and whether it was fair and reasonable to ask them to pay the full fee for a three year licence when they were merely ‘testing the water’. It was noted that Norwich City Council offered a three month ‘provisional’ taxi licence and officers agreed that, if members wished, that option could be explored for SNC. Members discussed the possibility of charging a lesser fee for new drivers which would then be deducted from the full fee if the driver decided to continue in the industry after a trial period. Some members were concerned that the Council would stand to lose money due to the administration costs of issuing a short term licence. After discussion, members voted and it was decided by a majority of 7 – 4 that officers should investigate the possibility of a more flexible approach for new drivers and circulate this information to members of the Committee, with the final decision being delegated to the Director of Growth and Localism.

In response to a question raised by the industry, members were in full agreement that licence holders who surrendered their licence prior to its expiration would not be entitled to a refund.

After further discussion, it was RESOLVED:

1. to delegate powers to issue lesser duration licences to the Director of Growth and Localism;

2. that a lesser duration licence would be issued for medical reasons only and for all drivers who required a medical annually;

3. that refunds would not be provided to those licence holders who surrendered their licence prior to its expiration;

and

4. that officers should investigate the possibility of a more flexible approach for new drivers and circulate this information to members of the Committee, with the final decision being delegated to the Director of Growth and Localism.

(The meeting closed at 10.50 am)

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Chairman