

Licensing Committee – 18 November 2015

Present: Councillor Miss Durdan (Chairman)
Councillor James (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Brown, Davies, Mrs Floyd, Gage and Nicholls.

Officers: John Rendell (Acting Licensing Manager), Alison Evens (Licensing Officer),
Mark Banczyk-Gee (Licensing Officer) and Emma Hill (Democratic Services
Officer)

Other: Councillor Berry

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

25. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Adkins, Hunt, Mrs Lees and Sully.

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 26 August 2015 were taken as read and were signed.

27. Public Question Time

Naomi and Amy Clarke from Barking Mad submitted asked why there was such a large difference between the Home Boarding Licence fees for Taunton Deane (and therefore West Somerset) and Sedgemoor (£98) and South Somerset (£75)?

In reply, the Acting Licensing Manager stated that the Animal Boarding Establishment Act of 1963 gave local authorities the power to set a fee for animal boarding and home boarding licences. The fee had to be reasonable and proportionate, with regard to the costs that the local authority incurred through processing an application and monitoring compliance with the licence thereafter.

Each local authority had its own application process and programme of monitoring compliance once a licence had been granted. In addition, it was for each local authority to decide how much of the costs the local authority wished to recover (and how this impacted on its central budget).

Taunton Deane Borough Council had decided that all costs that were incurred, were to be recovered. The current fee structure reflected the costs of processing an application and two inspections per annum, however this was to be reviewed over the course of 2016.

28. Licensing Update Report

Considered report previously circulated, which provided an update on the activities of the Council's Licensing Team, changes to legislation, current consultations and other general Licensing matters.

The performance of service was measured against the number of applications that were determined within 14 days of receipt and this target was 95% within the timescale. For Quarter 1, 75% of applications had been determined with 14 days with figures for Quarter 2 showing a decline to 60% within the timescale.

The backlog of applications had been isolated and stood at approximately 340 and it was estimated that it could take up to four months to clear. To address the backlog of work, two temporary members of staff had been employed, for a minimum of three months. This would be kept under review.

Ian Carter had now left the Council and John Rendell had been appointed Acting Licensing Manager. A permanent appointment for this position would be made in April 2016. Until then, the vacant Licensing Officer position would be backfilled temporarily.

Members were also provided with a comparison of the number of applications received between July and September 2015 for the preceding two years and a summary of the numbers of licenses in force and notices given as at 14 October 2015.

Below was a summary of activity relating to the Licensing Act 2003:-

- Licenses Issued - 402 Premises Licences, 1301 Personal Licences and 3011 Temporary Event Notices (TEN's) in force on 30 July 2015.
- Licenses Issued - 209 Hackney Carriages, 53 Private Hire Licences, 322 Taxi Drivers and 20 Private Hire Operators.
- Street Trading and s115e Consents - The Council had received 28 applications so far this year.
- Total number of Licenses under the Gambling Act 2005 was 228.
- The Street Collection Permits for this period was 288.
- The Animal Boarding Licence for this period was 13.

Below was a summary of all Licensing service activity. This included applications received and licences in force between July and September:-

- Application numbers between July and September remained fairly similar to that period in the preceding two years, with the exception of taxi and private hire related applications.
- Taxi and private hire applications had risen considerably since 2013. This could be attributed to applications made by out of area applicants - the majority of whom resided in Bristol.
- Since the introduction of the new policy, the number of applications had begun to decline and a number of applicants had withdrawn their applications.
- The full impact of the policy change would become clearer when the numbers of applications were known for the period October to December 2015.
- There had been a numbers of service requests received, nine of the requests constituted complaints about the conduct of licensed Hackney Carriage and private hire vehicle drivers.
- There had been only one formal Licensing Sub-Committee. This was held to determine a Premises Licence grant application for Knapp Farm, Hillfarrance.
- There had been an informal meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee during July to determine an application to vary a premises licence for 2 Bridge Street, Taunton. The formal Sub-Committee had been dispensed with.

- There had been two meetings of the Taxi Forum since August and a number of ideas had been brought forward at these meetings for information reports. This included limiting the number of Hackney Carriages and expanding the 'fit and proper' person test applied to drivers.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:- (Responses were shown in italics)

- Officers had presented Members with very clear evidence of the large increase to Taxi, Private Hire and driver applications.
- Which department did someone contact regarding holding an event near the town centre for instance in Somerset Square and Castle Green? *Contact needed to be made initially with James Hay at the Priory Depot.*

Resolved that the report to be noted.

(The meeting ended at 6.35 pm)