

MINUTES of the meeting of Regulatory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Tuesday 30 April 2013 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor JW Hope MBE (Chairman)
Councillor RC Hunt (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: CM Bartrum, PL Bettington, BA Durkin, Brig P Jones CBE,
PJ McCaull, C Nicholls and FM Norman

66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor GA Vaughan-Powell.

67. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no substitute members present at the meeting.

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

69. OBJECTION RECEIVED TO PROPOSED 2% TAXI FEE INCREASE

The Chairman adjourned the meeting for 5 minutes in order for Officers to contact Mr Jones, who had made a formal objection to the council about a proposed fee increase and who was absent from the hearing. The Head of Environmental Protection and Licensing made a call to Mr Jones' mobile phone as well as his home land line but he could not be contacted.

In Mr Jones' absence, a report was presented by the Head of Environmental Protection and Licensing about an objection which had been received from the trade to the proposed increase in hackney carriage/private hire licence fees and charges for 2013/2014. He explained that the increases were in line with corporate policy of a 2% uplift on all fees.

The Head of Environmental Protection and Licensing outlined the advertising process which had been followed regarding the proposals and consultation with the trade and public. He advised that an objection had been received by Mr Jones and he proceeded to read out the objection in full. In response to the objection he advised that the Ombudsman had concluded an investigation previously lodged by Mr Jones in relation to the adoption of full cost recovery by this committee in May 2012 and found that the correct procedure had been followed. He also advised that the proposed fee increase had been advertised in the Hereford Journal in accordance with the legislative requirements. It was noted that, unlike before, letters had not been sent out to all drivers on the occasion of the 2% uplift proposal due to cost implications, but that all operators had been contacted directly and a notice in the newspaper fulfilled the obligations of the council.

The Committee heard from the Strategic Financial Advisor who advised that income for the previous year was approximately £145k. This was below the estimated £158k income as a result of the late implementation of the 2012/13 fee structure as well as a reduction in licences issued throughout the County.

In response to a question, the Head of Environmental Protection and Licensing advised that the legal requirements regarding advertising the proposed increase had been met.

The Committee noted that the trade had recently been granted an increase of 7% on their tariffs and fares and further noted that the proposed increase was essential in order to avoid the possibility of the service being subsidised by the Council.

RESOLVED

That the Committee having heard the presentation by Officers covering the financial figures and savings already made by the taxi licensing service and fully considering the objections raised to the proposed increase, decided to agree to the 2% increase proposed.

The meeting ended at 10.37 am

CHAIRMAN