
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE, 11.06.18

Present: Councillors, Steve Collings, Annwen Daniels, Annwen Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dafydd Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Jason Wayne Parry, Peter Read, Angela Russell, Elfed W. Williams and Gareth Williams.

Also in Attendance: Gareth Jones (Senior Planning and Public Protection Manager), Gwenan Mai Roberts (Licensing Manager), Siôn Huws (Solicitor) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved to re-elect Councillor Peter Read as Chair of this Committee for the period 2018 - 2019

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved to re-elect Councillor Elfed Williams as Vice-chair of this Committee for the period 2018 - 2019

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor John Brynmor Hughes, Siôn Jones and Rheinalt Puw.

A concern was highlighted about the attendance of some Members of the political groups as a result of a recent change in the political balance. It was suggested to refer the observation to the Monitoring Officer.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 5 March 2018 as a true record.

7. MINUTES OF THE GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Submitted - for information, the minutes of a meeting of the General Licensing Sub-committee that took place on 13.03.2018.

8. REQUEST TO CHANGE THE PORTHMADOG MARKET DAY

The Solicitor highlighted that the Licensing Committee had no constitutional right to make a decision on the matter and that this was a matter for the Cabinet. The Senior Planning and Public Protection Manager was of the opinion that Members' attention needed to be drawn to the matter because of their terms of reference and it would be appropriate to include their observations in a report to the Cabinet.

Submitted - a report by the Head of Environment Department in response to a request by one of the Porthmadog market representatives to change the market day from Friday to Thursday. It was explained that a consultation had been held and that the result of that consultation had been included in the report on a format of reasons for and against the change.

Attention was drawn to e-mails received since publishing the report, where the Local Member stated that he had discussed the situation with the traders and that the vast majority of them were against changing the day.

In response to a question regarding the total places for traders in Porthmadog, it was noted that the location was confined and therefore up to 12 places could be accommodated comfortably. As it had been noted that up to 18 traders had responded to the consultation, it was suggested that traders who did not attend the Porthmadog market had made observations.

In response to a question regarding the fixed daily or annual charge, it was noted that traders signed an annual contract (with some possible exemptions). It was reiterated that the cost varied in terms of the stall size, with casual traders paying slightly more as they were not regular traders.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- It was disappointing that only one trader had submitted an application
- Moving to Thursday would have a detrimental impact on Barmouth market day
- It was clear that most traders wanted to keep the day as it was

It was proposed and seconded to recommend to the Cabinet to keep the Porthmadog market day on Friday.

The Members were thanked for the opportunity to give their observations on the matter.

9. PROPOSED TAXI LICENCE FEES 2018/19

Submitted - the report of the Head of Environment Department, asking the Committee to approve the proposal to increase the fees, subject to consultation with the taxi industry and consultation through public notice. It was explained that an increase in fees needed to be logical and set on a level to fully or partially recover costs (in accordance with Sections 53 and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976).

The Members were reminded that the General Licensing Committee had decided, at a meeting held on 24.6.13, that the fees had to be reviewed to fully recover the costs. It was noted in the report that the taxi fees had increased 25% in 2013 and 19.78%, and 10.78% in 2015 in order to fully recover the costs. The fees were not increased at all in 2016/17 or in 2017/18.

The impact of recent legislative changes on licensing process was referred to, which has created an increase in licensing processing work. Reference was also made to the financial assessment made of the proposed fees by the Treasurer's Department.

The current costs and the proposed costs were outlined, which included the cost of sending renewal reminder letters and the administration work associated with advising and communicating before and during the process of submitting an application. It was explained that the fees would need to be increased on an average of 28% in order to fully recover the costs.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- Much work had been done to meet and protect the industry in the past
- Needed to consider setting up a monthly direct debit payment provision rather than one annual full payment
- The industry needed to present their opinion formally during the consultation
- An application for a three-year licence was ultimately cheaper than a one-year licence and that the saving was substantial.

In response to a question regarding regional and national discussions about reconciling fees, it was emphasised that most authorities had seen an increase in costs since introducing a three-year licence. It was reiterated that the financial assessment had been made with the input of the Treasurer's Department which challenged the need to increase the cost of a three-year licence. It was noted that the decision had been made on the grounds that there was not much difference in costs between administering a three-year licence and a one-year licence following the initial work.

In response to a question regarding escalating enforcement matters, it was emphasised that it was not possible to use money from the costs to do so.

RESOLVED to approve the proposal to raise the fees to the recommended level, subject to consultation with the taxi industry and consultation through public notice.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.00am