

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH ON 13 FEBRUARY 2014

Members Present: Councillors Thacker (Chairman), Peach (Vice Chairman), Kreling, Nawaz, Jamil, Saltmarsh and Miners

Officers Present: Peter Gell, Strategic Regulatory Services Manager
Adrian Day, Licensing Manager
Gemma George, Senior Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Serluca and Davidson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meetings Held on:

3.1 14 November 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3.2 12 December 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Changes in the Licensing Policy for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing

The Committee received a report which followed on from its decision at the meeting held on 21 January 2013.

A full consultation had been launched in relation to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy in order to ensure that it remained appropriate and fit for purpose.

The purpose of the consultation was to seek responses from all stakeholders who had an interest in or may have been affected by the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy.

The consultation covered many areas of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing, but for the purposes of the report the Licensing Committee was asked to consider only vehicle testing for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles. Therefore only responses relating to that area were included. The other areas of consultation were to be included in further reports to the Committee at a later date.

The Committee was requested to approve one of the following options:

1. To introduce the requirement to have a standard MOT test carried out by any VOSA authorised MOT testing stations instead of the existing requirement for an MOT exemption test to be carried out by the Council's contracted test centre;
2. To introduce the requirement to have a standard MOT test carried out by only VOSA authorised MOT testing stations, which were members of the Council's "vehicle testing centre scheme" (at the time yet to be implemented) instead of the existing requirement for an MOT exemption test to be carried out by the Council's contracted test centre; or
3. To retain the current requirement to have an MOT exemption test carried out by the Council's contracted test centre and utilise the contract framework already in place with Amey (formerly known as Enterprise).

The Licensing Manager presented the report. Key points highlighted included:

- An annual MOT exemption test was currently carried out by Enterprise or Unity;
- Vehicles currently over six years of age needed to be tested every six months;
- The Police had put in a representation against Option 1 as this would dissolve the Council of any responsibility for testing. No representations had been made in favour of Option 1; and
- One drawback of Option 2 was that there would still be administrative costs relating to the tests. The previous secretary of the Hackney Carriage Federation had stated his support for Option 2.

Members questioned the Licensing Manager and responses included:

- There were currently five officers answering phones and processing applications. They spent roughly half of their work time on the telephone;
- As the consultation had been undertaken almost a year ago, there had been meetings with Amey (formally Enterprise) who had stated that they would look at increasing testing availability. They would also arrange plate fittings;
- There were roughly 180 Hackney Carriages in Peterborough and 635 annual tests had been carried out in 2013 and 250 six month tests had been carried out;
- If Option 2 was implemented, it would be the trade's choice as to whether or not to utilise Amey; and
- Option 2 would reduce the administrative burden on the Council.

Mr Choudhury, Peterborough Hackney Carriage Federation, had requested permission to address the Committee, this was agreed and the following points were raised:

- Option 2 was preferable as it would save the Licensing Office resources;
- Six monthly tests were supported, as were exemption certificates;
- Option 2 would free up competition in the market; and
- Prices would come down as there would be more competition.

Members debated the options available and questioned officers further. Key points highlighted included:

- Allowing more outlets would give convenience to drivers. There could be a preferred list to ensure that checks for disability and other safety checks would be carried out;
- Retention of Option 3 would create a monopoly and would keep prices high; and
- Option 3 would be the least resource intensive for officers.

Following debate, the Committee agreed that in order to proceed, further information on the Options was required.

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed to postpone the decision until a later date when more up-to-date paperwork could be provided for options two and three and an Amey representative could be present.

Reasons for the decision:

The decision was made in order to ensure that the decision was fair to everyone and made with more current information.

Chairman