

13 MARCH 2009

**NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee held at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst on Friday, 13 March 2009.

- p Cllr L R Puttock (Chairman)
- p Cllr A E J Shotter (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:**

- p G C Beck
- p W H Dow
- p J A G Hutchins
- p Mrs P Jackman
- p Mrs M McLean
- p J Penwarden
- A W Rice TD

**Councillors:**

- p W S Rippon-Swaine
- p R F Scrivens
- p Mrs B Smith
- p M S Wade
- p S S Wade
- p Mrs P A Wyeth

**Officers Attending:**

Ms M Stephens and P Weston.

**39. MINUTES.**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2009, having been circulated, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with any agenda items.

**41. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

Mr Trustner, owner of a limousine company in New Milton, was in attendance and addressed the Committee on the proposal to license stretched limousines. He explained that whilst he supported the idea of licensing limousines he felt that, in the light of the economic climate, members should consider the cost of licence fees for operators, and suggested that the Committee consider allowing the licence fees to be paid in instalments.

**42. STRETCHED LIMOUSINES (REPORT A).**

The Committee at its last meeting on 14 November had viewed a stretched limousine and discussed the proposal of licensing stretched limousines as Private Hire Vehicles (PHV).

The Committee were of the view that limousines should be licensed in order to ensure the safety of the public in the same way that the stringent conditions for hackney carriages provided for the safety of passengers.

The Committee therefore considered suggested conditions as set out in Appendix 1 to Report A to the Committee to attach to licences for stretched limousines. The Committee were made aware by the Licensing Officer that following consultation on the proposal to license limousines and proposed conditions, there had been no negative feedback from consultees. The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Owners' Association fully endorsed the proposal.

In relation to the current conditions and policies regulating private operators, some members expressed concern regarding the level of understanding of the general public. Members requested that a publicity campaign be undertaken to promote conditions imposed on operators to ensure that passengers understood the safety requirements and the Council's enforcement of these.

The Committee heard from the Licensing Officer that thorough safety checks would be carried out on all vehicles at the Marsh Lane depot. Those with a passenger seat capacity over eight would not be licensed by the Council and would come under the remit of the Traffic Commissioner. Equally the size and make of a limousine would be considered on its own merits, in terms of safety and whether it should be licensed.

**RESOLVED:**

That stretched limousines be licensed as Private Hire Vehicles in accordance with the conditions as detailed at Appendix 1 to Report A to the Committee and that Officers organise a publicity campaign setting out the Council intention to licence limousines and the relevant conditions.

**43. ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES (REPORT B).**

The Committee considered the enforcement and compliance actions recently undertaken by Licensing Services.

The Committee was pleased to see that it was apparent from the visits that had been made to licensed premises since the appointment of the Enforcement Officer, which had resulted in investigations of complaints and the collection of fees. The offences were largely non-compliance with administrative matters under the licensing regime.

Some members expressed the view that the large number of visits to licensed premises showed that many licensed premises were not complying with their obligations under the Licensing Act 2003. Members recognised that regular dialogue with the new Enforcement Officer would enhance licence holders' knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities, but felt that robust and stringent enforcement should take place in order to ensure a high standard of compliance in the District.

Members found the information contained in the report useful and requested that a progress report on enforcement activities be brought to the Committee on an annual basis.

Members commended the work of the Enforcement Officer.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted and that the Committee receive annual reports on enforcement activities.

CHAIRMAN

(GPLC130309)