

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 JUNE 2008

Councillors: Tony Linden (*Chairman*) (P), Peter Argyle (P), Jeff Beck (P), Paul Bryant (A), Billy Drummond (A), Adrian Edwards (P), Geoff Findlay (A), Manohar Gopal (P), Owen Jeffery (AP), Mollie Lock (P), Gwen Mason (P), Andrew Rowles (AP), Quentin Webb (P), Keith Woodhams (AP)

PART I

4. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Owen Jeffery, Keith Woodhams and Andrew Rowles.

5. MINUTES.

The Minutes of the meetings held on 21 April and 8 May 2008 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

Minute 8 of the Minutes of the 21st April: WPC Baryman should read WPC Berryman.

Apologies were received from Councillors Mollie Lock and Peter Argyle at this meeting.

Minute 3 of the Minutes of the 8th May to be amended to state that Gwen Mason had been appointed as the Vice-Chairman.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest received.

7. HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF 2008/09

Paul Anstey (Principal Environmental Health Officer) summarised the report which had been circulated. Clarification was sought on:

- Whether a formulation could be put in place so that more minor proposed adjustments to fares could be automatically – and more simply - implemented rather than having to go back through full committee each time.

John Priest (Environmental Health & Licensing Manager) replied that a formula could be developed to take account of fuel price and other associated costs so that fares could be adjusted. He would have to discuss the matter with Brian Leahy whether any further changes would need to be brought to full committee – but irrespective, any changes would need to be published in the local press and be open to the challenge process.

- Officers' views on the proposed increase was sought.

Officers felt that this was not an unreasonable request – although Paul was not aware of any other local authorities which had provided for an interim increase.

Standing Orders were suspended in order to allow Mr Nemeth (West Berkshire Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Operators Association) to speak.

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Mr Nemeth made a number of points in support of the proposed fare rise:

- The price of diesel had risen substantially in the last few months - and was still rising. The trade had been accepting below inflation rises in fares in recent years and had no option but to increase the standard fare. He was aware that increasing the start rate would more adversely affect the shorter trips, but they did not necessarily want to increase the fares for more customers living in more rural areas unreasonably. Therefore they felt that increasing the start rate by 50p would be the most fair.

The Association was more than happy to work with the Council to look at a formulation mechanism.

There was an error in the letter dated 13th May. The call for a flat rate 50p increase in fare was being sought for Monday to Saturday daytime only – not Monday to Sunday as stated as enhanced fares on Sunday were already in place.

- A question was raised as to why the enhanced rates (i.e. evening and Sunday) had not been increased as was likely that customers at these times were more likely to afford the increase.

Mr Nemeth said that a careful balance needed to be struck between the affordability of shorter (typically urban) journeys and those longer distances into the rural areas. They felt that 50p was not an excessive rise.

- A question was raised as to whether customers had been consulted on the increase?

Mr Nemeth said that he had not received any hugely negative views.

Standing Orders were reintroduced.

A concern was raised by one Member that they were unsure about the increase as was a service that people depend on.

Resolved that the recommendation as set out in the report be approved.

It was agreed that an Extraordinary Meeting be held to agree the formula for any further increases in fares. Officers would advise the committee on the likely timescale.

8 AOB

The Chairman raised the issue of training - or provision of training for new Members – on the decision-making process in Licensing. He requested that all Members attend. Officers would investigate potentially setting up some courses in tandem with Members from neighbouring authorities in order to spread the cost.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and closed at 7:00 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature: