

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2021

Councillors Present: Adrian Abbs, Phil Barnett (Vice-Chairman), Graham Bridgman, Rick Jones (Chairman), Tony Linden and David Marsh

Also Present: Moira Fraser (Principal Officer - Policy & Governance), Councillor Jeff Beck and Councillor Graham Pask

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Peter Argyle, Councillor Billy Drummond, Councillor Claire Rowles and Councillor Martha Vickers

Councillor(s) Absent:

PART I

9. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

10. Statutory Consultation on Hackney Carriage Tariffs (DoD4137)

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 3) on the review of the current Hackney Carriage fare scale in light of the recent non-statutory consultation undertaken with the Taxi Trade. Members were asked to consider the outcome of that consultation and then if appropriate agree on a set of fares to consult on as part of the statutory consultation process.

Moira Fraser explained that the Hackney Carriage fare scale had not changed since 2013. Due to the impact of the pandemic on the trade and in light of the very recent non-statutory consultation with the trade and several years of complex discussions, it was requested that the Committee consider if it would be appropriate to consult on amending the fares. If Members were minded to do so they were also asked to consider the mechanisms and timescales for undertaking the statutory consultation. Councillor Graham Bridgman explained that he had previously put forward proposals for a more logical set of fees. However, during the consultation and in discussions with the people who calibrated the meters, it had come to light that the proposals, whilst logical, could not be accommodated on the meters. For example the trade wished to working around numbers of around ten pence or twenty pence to prevent taxi drivers from having to carry around loads of small change. It was this that subsequently led to the revised proposals as set out in the agenda.

The non-statutory consultation had shown mixed views around raising the fares, with some members of the trade stating that they would like to see a 10% increase, others supported a 5% increase and some stating that they would not like to see the fares increased at all. The five percent rise was a compromise between the ranges of opinions.

Councillor Adrian Abbs added that the rise would not be mandatory and that the fare would be the maximum that the taxi operators could charge. He supported the proposal from Councillor Bridgman for a consultation on a 5% increase..

Moira Fraser asked the Committee Members to consider the timescales for the consultation and to approve the Officers recommendations for the end of the

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consultation process on 14 October; as this would ensure that adverts would appear in local newspapers, on the Council website and further letters could be written to the trade. While this timescale would exceed the statutory provisions it was felt that it would be appropriate to extend the timescales on this occasion. If objections were received and not withdrawn the matter would come back to the Licensing Committee in November and a recommendation could then be taken to the Executive on 18 November 2021 for determination.

It was noted that, in accordance with the Constitution, authority was delegated to the Service Director (Development and Regulation) to signoff the decision to go out to consultation.

RESOLVED that the Licensing Committee Noted the existing tariffs after considering the outcome of the recent non-statutory consultation undertaken with the Taxi Trade as set out in Appendix B.

The Licensing Committee Agreed to recommend to the Service Director that:

- they consult on a variation of a five percent increase to the table of fares;
- that a statutory notice be placed in the Newbury Weekly News, the Reading Chronicle, on the Public Protection Partnership’s website and on display at the Market Street Council Offices;
- a copy of the notice should be emailed to the trade;
- the consultation period should run from the 16 September to the 14 October 2021.

(The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm and closed at 4.51 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature