

Licensing Committee

Thursday, 28 April 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Salman Akbar (Chair), Councillor Lucy Harrison (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Michael Chalk, Andrew Fry, Julian Grubb and Ann Isherwood

Also Present:

Mr. P. Bladon

Officers:

Vanessa Brown and Dave Etheridge

Democratic Services Officer:

Pauline Ross

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome everyone to the meeting.

23. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Karen Ashley, Joanne Beecham and Aled Evans.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Mr P. Bladon attended the Licensing Committee meeting, to speak in objection to the variation of Table of Fares for Hackney Carriages, under the Council's public speaking rules. Mr Bladon had raised an objection to the use of imperial units being shown on the table of table of fares and had stated that he strongly believed that the tariffs, as detailed on Appendix 1 to the report, should only be given in metric units.

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Chair

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Mr Bladon for his detailed speech.

26. CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTION TO VARIATION OF TABLE OF FARES FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES

The Principal Officer (Licensing), Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), explained that the Council had responsibility under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, for setting the maximum fares that could be charged by hackney carriage vehicles licensed to operate within the district.

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Hackney Carriage (“Taxi”) fares were made up of an initial hiring charge and a “mileage” rate, both of which were expressed in terms of distance and / or time per unit cost. This was because when a hired taxi was stationary or moving slowly in traffic the meter continued charging, but by time, instead of distance.

The table of fares applied only to hackney carriage vehicles. Private hire operators were free to agree their hiring charges in advance with their customers, normally at the time of booking the journey.

Members were reminded that at the Licensing Committee held on 21st March 2022, the Committee approved the advertisement of a proposed variation to the existing table of fares for hackney carriages, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

An objection to the proposed table of fares was received from a member of the public. The individual concerned had objected on the basis that they believed that the Council’s table of fares should only display metric units (metres and kilometres).

Members were asked to note that the objector had not raised any objection in respect of the variations being proposed to the maximum cost of journeys undertaken in hackney carriages, only to the table of fares, which had included reference to imperial units of measurement (yards and miles). A copy of the objection was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

Members were further informed that the proposed varied table of fares showed distances expressed in both metric (metres) and imperial units of measurement (yards and miles). This was also true of the current table of fares that had been approved for implementation by the Licensing Committee in November 2018.

Officers believed that the current format of the table of fares was compliant with current legislation and was clear and understandable for passengers and licence holders. It was also believed to be consistent with the vast majority of fare tables that were published by other local authorities across England and Wales.

Members were being asked to consider the objection received to the proposed table of fares and to resolve to bring the revised table of fares, as detailed at Appendix to the report, into force (with or without modifications) on 7th May 2022.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his detailed report.

In response to Councillor M. Chalk, the Council's Legal Advisor stated that the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, detailed ways in which Local Authorities (LA) dealt with taxi fares and that it was within the gift of each LA as to how they detailed those rates of fares; either in metric units, imperial units or both. LA could determine how a member of the public would easily understand the table of fares.

The Chair further stated that the objection received was not an objection to the actual table of fares, but an objection to the use of imperial measurements. In his opinion drivers and the travelling public may well understand miles more than kilometres, however officers had reached a good compromise and had detailed both metric and imperial units in the table of fares, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

On being put to the vote, and having considered the objection received it was

RESOLVED that the table of fares, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be brought into force (without modification) with effect from 7th May 2022.