

MINUTES OF LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

21 MARCH 2018

PRESENT:

Councillors Cade (Chairman), Allen, Mrs Avis, Brader, Miss Dumbleton, Lowe, Mrs Nash, Mrs Roberts, Mrs Roodhouse and Ms Watson-Merret

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Roberts.

8. MINUTES

The minutes of the following meetings were approved and signed by the Chairman:

Licensing and Safety Committee 4 July 2017;
Licensing Sub-Committee (General) 27 June 2017, 31 July 2017, 5 October 2017, 26 October 2017, 11 January 2018, 30 January 2018, 15 February 2018, 12 March 2018; and
Licensing Sub-Committee (Alcohol and Regulated Entertainment) 31 July 2017.

9. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Mrs Bragg.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

11. REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Environment and Public Realm (Part 1 - agenda item 4) concerning a proposed increase to the current hackney carriage tariff (fare).

The Principal Licensing Officer gave the Committee a detailed presentation on:

- the background position;
- a clear explanation of how the current tariff works;
- the consultation with all licensed drivers and hackney carriage vehicle owners;
- the Government Monthly Fuel Price Report;
- the Consumer Prices Index – cumulative figures;
- comparisons of hackney carriage tariffs with neighbouring authorities, national and regional tariffs;
- a detailed explanation of the proposed tariff;
- an explanation of the differences between the current and proposed tariffs;

- the proposed change to the removal of the charge for extras; and
- the timetable for implementation.

The Council had the authority to set the hackney carriages fares by virtue of Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

The tariff established the maximum fare charged by the Council. A fare tariff chart showing the current fares must be prominently displayed in all hackney carriage vehicles.

The current tariffs were approved in 2008. The Committee last considered a review of the hackney carriage fares in 2016. At that time, the Committee decided that the information and evidence available to them was insufficient to reach a decision, due in part to opposing opinions of licence holders within the trade, and because the financial situation at that time was very different.

The key proposed changes to the current tariff included:

Tariff 1 would apply from 6am to midnight – currently the daytime tariff ends at 6pm.

First 1232 yards (0.7 mile) or 280 seconds or part thereof - £3.20

Each subsequent 176 yards or part thereof or 40 seconds waiting time - £0.20

Tariff 2 would be time-and-a-half from midnight to 6.00am daily and on public holidays (excluding Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day) – currently tariff 2 was simply the addition of £0.50 to the daytime tariff.

First 1232 yards (0.7 mile) or 280 seconds or part thereof - £4.80

Each subsequent 117.3 yards of part thereof or 27 seconds waiting time - £0.20

Tariff 3 (Christmas Day, Boxing Day or New Years' Day) would apply from 6pm on 24 December to 6am on 27 December and from 6pm on 31 December until 6am on 2 January - largely in keeping with the current tariff structure of double the day rate.

First 1232 yards (0.7 mile) or 280 seconds or part thereof - £6.40

Each subsequent 176 yards or part thereof or 40 seconds waiting time - £0.40

Extra Charges – these would no longer be a feature of the tariff structure. The current tariff included a range of extra charges and the Principal Licensing Officer explained that the reason for the removal of extras was due to the fact that the extras button on the meter could be used to artificially inflate the fare.

Soiling Charge – would not be removed and would remain at the current level of £100.

The Principal Licensing Officer recommended that in future years a bi-annual review of the tariff be conducted. The current tariff was very complex, making a review more difficult and confirmed that the proposed tariff had been simplified to make it much easier for the public to understand and to make the task of carrying out a review easier.

The proposed increases were based on the responses to the consultation with the taxi trade, which demonstrated overwhelming support for an increase of ten per cent or above and strong support for the removal of the extras charges. The soiling charge would remain unchanged at £100 and would apply at all times.

Feedback indicated that it was the shortest journey charge that was most in need of being addressed, with the current time and/or distance increments being below the national averages.

A balance was needed between the needs and rights of drivers to earn a living and the rights of the travelling public to be charged a reasonable rate.

The proposed increases were conservative and would bring the tariff in line with neighbouring authorities.

Legislation requires the Council to advertise any variation to the table of fares in a minimum of one local paper. The public notice must list the expiry date of the consultation period, which must be a minimum of fourteen days from the date of publication.

A copy of the Notice must also be displayed on Council premises. As this was the first change for a number of years every means available to inform the public, as widely as possible, of the increase would be used.

Any objections to the proposal must be considered by the Committee before any new tariffs could be brought into force. If no objections were to be received, the earliest implementation date would be at the beginning of May 2018, however the Principal Licensing Officer assured the Committee that there would be no unnecessary delay and the change would be implemented as swiftly as possible, depending upon newspaper publication days and the availability of taximeter fitters/programmers.

Once any fare increase had been approved, the Council was required to ensure all licensed hackney carriage vehicles had taxi meters programmed with the new tariffs, that meters were checked and sealed to ensure they were tamper- proof, and that there was a current fare card on display, clearly and prominently, in each vehicle.

This was to ensure that members of the public are not overcharged for their journey, and that there was a clear explanation about the fare change or increase.

The Council would commission a day to invite local specialist meter programmers to update the meters at a reduced rate for drivers to make the changeover as cost effective and convenient as possible.

RESOLVED THAT – the proposed changes and increases to the hackney carriage tariff be approved.

CHAIRMAN