LICENSING PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY 2016

PRESENT**:** Councillors Jesse Grey (Chairman), Malcolm Alexander, Hashim Bhatti, Phillip Bicknell, John Bowden, John Collins, Maureen Hunt, Derek Sharp and Sharpe

Officers: Sarah Conquest, Steve Johnson and Shilpa Manek

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hilton, Hollingsworth, Luxton, Richards and Smith.

Councillors Story and Wilson were substituting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest noted.

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting on Tuesday 12 January 2016 were unanimously agreed.

PROPOSED INCREASE TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

The Chairman invited the speaker, Mr Yasin, Chairman of RBWM taxi association, to address the Panel Members. Mr Yasin voiced his concerns about the many increases that the Hackney Carriage drivers were having to deal with. Mr Yasin was concerned that the fares remained the same and drivers were at a loss. Mr Yasin suggested making the start fare £3.00 instead of £2.80 and increasing both the extra passenger fare and the extra baggage fare from 20p to 40p. Mr Yasin was basing all these increases on the recent charges that were implemented such as the DVLA database check fee of £7.50 and the increase in the temporary licence fee.

The Chairman advised Panel Members that there were 180 Hackney vehicles, there were 1500 drivers and 1100 private hire vehicles. The last increase of 3% was in 2014.

Steve Johnson advised Panel Members that they needed to concentrate on Hackney Carriage fare tariffs only. The local authority could only set Hackney Carriage fares, not private hire vehicle fares. Steve Johnson explained the report and all its appendices. The recommendation for Members was to consider increasing the Hackney Carriage fares.

Members raised the following points:

- Councillor Story was concerned about people who regularly use taxi's for going to the doctor or to hospital and highlighted that he would not support an increase in fares that would effect local people doing local, short, necessary journeys. Councillor Story was informed that a 2% price increase would no change the current fare of short trips.
- Councillor Bicknell was concerned that there was no common denominator to compare the price now and the variations with all the suggested price increases. Councillor Bicknell considered that a total number of journeys on average would be useful information too and that if there was a threat that new taxi firms such as Uber were taking business then keeping fares low was necessary. Councillor Bicknell reminded Members that Hackney Carriages had to keep their meter on whilst doing a journey or could agree a fare with the passenger.

- Councillor Alexander highlighted that fuel prices had decreased, which was a large cost to drivers but now the fuel prices had fallen, why was the increase of fares necessary.
- Councillor Bowden discussed the taxi ranks in Windsor and the number of yards charged for passengers using one rank instead of the other.
- Councillor Sharp was not content with the layout of all the information provided and therefore felt that he was not qualified enough to make a decision. Councillor Sharp suggested that they needed a comparison table to be able to make comparisons and then a decision.
- Councillor Sharpe highlighted that the Panel was trying to achieve the support for Hackney Carriage fares and help for the local authority to cover their costs.
- Councillor Hunt reminded Members that Hackney Carriage vehicles were the only ones who could collect passengers on their return journey, other taxi vehicles could not.
- Councillor Bicknell highlighted that there were 185 Hackney Carriage vehicles running as self employed businesses, however they carried the borough's colours and signage. This looked as if the borough was endorsing Hackney Carriage vehicles. Was this really a good time to increase fares?
- The Chairman reminded Members that as a result of the deregulation, the borough had served the public well providing a better facility. The Chairman questioned if it was the taxi drivers that were losing out and whether they warranted higher fares.
- Councillor Hunt agreed with many other Members that the fares should not increase.
- Councillor Wilson agreed with Members that further information was required to make decisions. A proper analysis was required including a comparison table.
- Neil Allen, Legal, advised that if the Panel needed further information to make decision then the item could be deferred. Neil Allen reminded Members that caution would be required as private hire vehicle costs could vary and could be very different to Hackney Carriage vehicles.
- Member requested further information such as a minimum fare for 1 mile, 2 miles, 3 miles, 4 miles, 5 miles and 6 miles for certain journeys and then split by the increase percentages. Members felt that short journeys were important and needed to be considered.

Councillor Bowden proposed that this item was deferred for one cycle till the October meeting. Councillor Alexander seconded the motion. All Members unanimously agreed.

Steve Johnson suggested preparing a comparison table and emailing to Members for further suggestions, ready for another discussion at the next meeting. Neil Allen reminded Member not to make any predeterminations.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the next meeting of the Licensing Panel would be Tuesday 11 October 2016.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 7.00 pm

CHAIRMAN…….

DATE…….....