

LICENSING PANEL

TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Jesse Grey (Chairman), David Burbage (Vice-Chairman), Malcolm Alexander, Phillip Bicknell, John Bowden, John Collins, David Hilton, Maureen Hunt, Wesley Richards, Derek Sharp, Julian Sharpe, Shamsul Shelim and Derek Wilson

Also in attendance:

Officers: Sarah Conquest, Steve Johnson, Shilpa Manek and Greg Nelson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bhatti, Hollingsworth and Smith.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of interest were noted.

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting on Wednesday 13 July 2016 were unanimously agreed.

PROPOSED INCREASE TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

Steve Johnson, Enforcement Principal, introduced the report on Proposed increase to Hackney Carriage Fares. The report had been presented at the July 2016 Licensing Panel and Members had deferred the report to the next Licensing Panel as Members wanted further information on what the proposed increase would actually look like and as a result of the uncertain economic environment.

Steve Johnson went through the report and all the appendices and explained that it was up to Members to discuss and agree the way forward. Steve Johnson advised that if an increase of fares was agreed then a consultation period would be required of 14 days.

There were three speakers present at the meeting, Mr Yasin, Mr Jarral and Mr Garelick.

Mr Yasin, Chairman of RBWM taxi association, highlighted that the Hackney Carriages mainly covered local journey's and an increase of less than 5% would not even move the meter and therefore there would need to be at least a 5% rise especially for local journey's. Mr Yasin was in favour for an additional passenger increase of 20p. The Hackney Carriages currently charge 20p per extra passenger and would like this to be increased to 40p per extra passenger.

Mr Jarral explained that Hackney Carriage drivers worked a minimum of 35 hours which was equivalent of £6.04 per hour. The RBWM fares were equivalent to fares in the Midlands whereas the living standards were much higher in the south.

Mr Garelick highlighted all the advantages of the Hackney Carriage. These included the average cost of £31K, the disability access function, the public safety aspect and all drivers were trained to a professional level. Currently all drivers were earning below the living wage and Hackney Carriages were losing out to business as a result of cross boundary drivers.

Points discussed by Members included:

- Members were not clear on what increase the Hackney Carriage drivers wanted.
- The last fare rise was in 2014 of only 3% with a 20p increase per additional passenger for fares of more than two passengers.
- Members were not clear on the average journey's that were done and the number of additional drivers. Officers explained that average journey data was not collected and there were not many increases of Hackney Carriage drivers.
- Increased fares having an effect on use of Hackney Carriages.
- A 10% increase of fares was discussed with no increase in additional passenger charge.
- Private cars were used more for door to door services and Hackney Carriages were used more from taxi ranks, such as at train stations.
- Petrol prices were discussed, insurance and taxes were discussed.
- A premium Hackney Carriage service was provided by the drivers who were always professional.
- A 15% increase of fares was discussed with no increase in additional passenger charge.
- The possibility of a discount for advantage card holders was proposed.

Councillor Hunt proposed a 10% increase in fares with additional passenger charge staying at 20p. This was seconded by Councillor Bowden. This fell.

Councillor Bicknell proposed a 15% increase in fares with the additional passenger charge staying at 20p. This was seconded by Councillor Richards. This was passed.

A named vote was taken and the 15% increase in fares with the additional passenger charge staying at 20p was passed. Councillors Alexander, Collins, Bicknell, Shelim and Grey voted for this and Councillors Hunt, Bowden, Hilton, Sharpe and Wilson voted against and Councillors Sharp and Burbage abstained from voting. This was passed.

Steve Johnson advised that a statutory process of advertising would need to take place. A notice must be published in at least one of the local papers specifying a period of 14 days from the date of the first publication for objections. Should there be no objections during the period then the revised table of fares would come into effect the day after the last date of objections.

The Chairman asked officers to look into the benefits for advantage card holders.

HACKNEY CARRIAGE LIVERY

Steve Johnson, Enforcement Principal, introduced the report on Hackney Carriage Livery. The report summarised the current conditions and what the Hackney Carriage trade had requested. Steve Johnson highlighted that the current conditions were only agreed in 2012. The purpose of the report was to allow the Panel to consider the issue and to decide the way forward.

The Hackney Carriage trade had raised the following issues:

- An all white vehicle would be better.
- A smaller logo on the vehicle which was straight and removable would be better.
- Allow advertising on the vehicles.

Sarah Conquest, Licensing Assistant explained that the main difference between a Hackney Carriage and a private hire car was that a Hackney Carriage vehicle could be hailed within the borough and private hire vehicle could only be pre booked. Outside the borough, the Hackney Carriage vehicle could not be hailed.

There were two speakers present at the meeting, Mr Jarral and Mr Garelick.

Mr Jarral expressed that the main reason for suggesting the changes were because the cars could not be used for private work with the current livery.

Mr Garelick advised Members that the current livery cost £1000 per vehicle. The livery made it more costly to sell or purchase a vehicle. The choice of a plain white, silver or black vehicle would allow flexibility and allow drivers to take private bookings.

Members discussed the following points:

- Removing or altering the branding would be detrimental.
- The residents recognise the RBWM branding.
- RBWM branding provides a safety feeling for residents and represents quality.

It was unanimously agreed that the livery should stay as it currently is and no need to bring a report to a future meeting.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the next meeting of the Licensing Panel.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 7.45 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....