

LICENSING PANEL

TUESDAY, 2 APRIL 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Carwyn Cox (Chairman), John Bowden, Maureen Hunt, Sayonara Luxton, Asghar Majeed, Hari Sharma, Julian Sharpe and Derek Wilson

Officers: Shilpa Manek, Greg Nelson and David Scott

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bhatti and Sharp.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest were received from Councillor Hari Sharma as he worked with First Bus Group and bus routes 702 and 703 served Ascot.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

CHANGES TO THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF AT THE ROYAL ASCOT RACE MEETING

Greg Nelson, Trading Standards & Licensing Lead, introduced the report and went through all the points within it.

The Panel were addressed by Mr Yasin, representative of the taxi association. Mr Yasin informed the Panel that from Ascot station to the designated rank in the racecourse, on race days, the journey could take very long due to the traffic. Mr Yasin informed the Panel that fares could not be refused and non-Hackney Carriage providers were charging a lot more. The Panel were also addressed by Mr Sabir, professional driver, who had been driving on race days for the last ten years. Mr Sabir informed the Panel that tariff 1 was very low and tariff 2 would be more suitable and on par with other private hire drivers charges.

Councillor Sharma gave support for Option 2 in the report. Councillor Sharma pointed out that traffic was very bad on race days and all other transport companies had higher fares for peak times so this issue was overdue at being considered.

Councillor Majeed gave support for Option 2 in the report and highlighted that it was really important to look after our residents but also our drivers.

The Chairman clarified that tariff 2 would only apply from the specific rank in the racecourse grounds car park during the Royal Ascot Week meeting. During all other times, tariff 1 would apply.

Councillor Bowden asked for more information on other race days and at other racing venues before changing to tariff 2.

Councillor Sharpe asked if the Advantage Card could be used for RBWM residents but after a short discussion, the Panel felt this would not work.

Councillors Hunt and Luxton, both supported Option 2 in the report. Councillor Hunt stressed that notice of the changes should be given to our residents and other users, and that long distance fares could still be agreed before the journey began between the driver and passenger. Greg Nelson informed the Panel that signage was currently in the vehicle, tariff 2 would be used for short journeys and tariff 1 for long distance fares or a fare could be agreed before travelling.

Greg Nelson informed the Panel that a consultation would take place. An advert would be placed in the local newspaper for 14 days and responses would be collated. If the Panel agreed to Option 2, feedback would be provided to the Panel at the July meeting after this year's Royal Ascot Week on how the operation of Tariff 2 had gone.

All Panel Members (Councillors Cox, Hunt, Luxton, Majeed, Sharma, Sharpe and D Wilson) except Councillor Bowden voted for Option 2 in the report to go ahead with a trial and provide a verbal update at the next scheduled meeting in July. Councillor Bowden preferred Option 1 to leave as it was now.

RESOLVED: That Option 2 be agreed as a trial, to amend the Hackney Carriage Tariff such that Tariff 2 is used for RBWM licenced hackney carriages picking up at any time at the official rank in the racecourse only during the Royal Ascot Week race meeting,

- for all journeys wholly within the Royal Borough, and
- for all other journeys, subject to the driver and passenger being allowed to agree a fare at the start of the journey.

ACTION: Greg Nelson to provide a verbal update at the next Licensing Panel scheduled for July 2019.

DRAFT STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING

Greg Nelson, Trading Standards & Licensing Lead, introduced the report and went through all the points within it. The Statutory Guidance was noted as at draft stage and for information only at this stage, and currently out for consultation.

Greg Nelson pointed out that the RBWM policies would need to meet the guidance if it was agreed, however many of the current RBWM policies were already very close to what would be mandatory if the guidance was implemented. Some policies did not fully comply but this could be amended easily.

Members were asked to agree that, should the draft guidance be adopted and become statutory guidance, the current RBWM Hackney Carriage Driver and Vehicle Policy & Conditions, the RBWM Private Hire Driver and Vehicle Policy & Conditions and the RBWM Private Hire Operator Policy & Conditions would be reviewed and brought into line with the statutory guidance.

After a lengthy discussion, the Panel noted the report and agreed its recommendation.

RESOLVED: That the report was noted and the Panel unanimously agreed the Officer's recommendations, including that the draft responses to the consultation would be submitted as drafted.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the future meeting dates of the Licensing Panel.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 7.20 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....