

Wednesday 20 August 2008
at 6.00pm



General Licensing Committee

MEMBERS: Councillor Mrs MORRIS (Chairman) Councillor THOMPSON (Deputy Chairman), Councillors BELSEY, ELKIN, Mrs GOODALL, GOODWIN, GOODYEAR, HARRIS, HEAPS, Mrs MADELL, Mrs POOLEY, and SALSBURY.

(Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Bloom, Purchase and Miss Woodall).

1 Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2008 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

2 Declaration of Interests.

None were received.

3 Determination of Taxi Fares.

The Committee considered the report of the Licensing Manager regarding hackney carriage fares and options submitted by the trade in respect of the fare structure and the level of fares to be charged.

The last fare tariff revision and associated increase was implemented in June 2007 and a fuel surcharge of 30 pence per journey was agreed on 26 June 2008 as an interim measure to offset the increase in fuel prices.

Two members of the trade had submitted proposals for an increase in the current maximum metered fare, tariffs A and B as set out in the report, and all hackney carriage proprietors had been consulted on the proposals. A further proposal was submitted by Eastbourne and Country as a result of the consultation and an amended version of tariff B was also submitted. The Committee was advised that neither of these options had been consulted upon with the wider trade.

The outcome of the consultation and ballot were set out in the report and the Committee was advised that there had been a 39% turnout. Details of the current and the proposed tariffs were set out in the report.

Mr P Smith and Mr D Stone-Cox addressed the Committee in support of tariff B, as amended which maintained the current tariff structure and proposed an increase on all rates. They referred to tariff A which removed Sundays and Bank Holidays from rate 2 and stated that this would reduce the number of drivers prepared to work over holiday periods and on Sundays. With reference to the issue of extras and overcharging, Mr Smith indicated that

only 2 complaints had been made to the Licensing Team over the past 18 months. They stated their intention to submit a simplified structure for consideration next year.

Mr I Staines addressed the Committee in support of maintaining the rate for multi-seater/wheelchair accessible vehicles carrying 5 or more passengers to compensate for greater fuel usage, journey times and vehicle wear and tear.

Mr S Chambers addressed the Committee on the technical capacity of meters and stated that older models, currently used by 50% of the trade, had limited memory capacity which constrained the implementation of a complex tariff structure.

Mr M Reeves addressed the Committee in support of tariff A which simplified the current structure and would be more easily understood by the general public. The proposal removed the extra charges which he considered were open to potential abuse. The Committee was advised by the Licensing Manager that a request had been made by Mr R Doxford for his letter of August 2005, submitted by Mr Reeves as part of his supporting information, to be disregarded.

Mr B Morris advised the Committee that tariff A was not supported by the majority of the trade. He supported the retention of the current fare structure and stated that the removal of extras would require a much higher start rate to compensate drivers and would increase the cost for single passengers. A surcharge for removals should also be maintained as this was a common request which normally involved shorter journeys.

The Committee duly considered all submissions made to them, and agreed that a simplified fare tariff minus the "extras" system would be easier for the travelling public to understand and majority of Members supported this approach.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Committee endorses the adoption of a simplified tariff structure based on 3 rates and which maintains the following elements: A rate for 5 or more passengers; Surcharge for removals; Fouling of vehicle charge.

(2) That an 8 week consultation be carried out with the trade regarding the level of fares to be charged based on the new tariff structure.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

**Mrs S Morris
Chairman**