

Minutes of Licensing

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 30 January 2024, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor I Brown (Chair)

Councillors:

S Brunskill	J Rogerson
R Elms	G Scott
S Farmer	R Walsh
M French	D Brocklehurst
G Hibbert	M Graveston
R Newmark	K Spencer
S O'Rourke	M Peplow

In attendance: Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Solicitor

Also in attendance: Councillor D O'Rourke

652 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from absence.

653 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

654 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests.

655 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

656 HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking Committee's views about whether Hackney Carriage fares should be reviewed.

It was noted that at the annual taxi meeting, Hackney Carriage representatives reported that customers had questioned the level of night-time rates, as they considered that £6.75 for the first mile and £1.05 for each 1/5 mile thereafter was too high. They asked for consideration to be given to a reduction of the night-time uplift.

Committee were advised in general terms of the fare tariffs implemented by other local authorities.

The consensus was that there should be a reduction in the uplift and discussion took place as to what level the night-time fare should be set at.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the reduction in the night-time tariff for Hackney Carriages. For the hiring begun between 12 midnight and 6am and between 7pm and 12 midnight on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, the fare will be £5.50 for up to one mile, then the standard rate/fare of £0.70 for each 1/5th mile thereafter.
2. Authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to advertise the proposed table of fares as required by legislation.

657

OPERATORS' LICENCE FEES

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to determine whether there should be any variation in the fees charged for a private hire operator's licence.

It was noted that, at the annual taxi meeting, an operator had requested that the Council review operators' fees, as he considered they were too high and made reference to their role as merely a booking agent.

Officers had carried out a review, which included consideration of operators' responsibilities and a comparison of the Council's current fees against those set by other local authorities (taking into account the particular circumstances particular to the Ribble Valley) and they were felt to be reasonable.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve that the fees set for the issue of operators' licences, as set on 31 October 2023, be maintained.

658

ELAP SEATS AND WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to determine whether there should be consultation on variation of the Council's Licensing Policy in respect of Hackney Carriages, Private Hire vehicles, drivers and operators in respect of provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles and vehicles with ELAP seats.

It was noted that, at the annual taxi meeting, some Hackney Carriage proprietors had requested discontinuance of the requirement for ELAP seats. Members were advised that the Council's view thus far was that if an ELAP seat was to be withdrawn from a vehicle, it should be replaced with a fully wheelchair accessible vehicle.

The issue of disability awareness training for drivers was also highlighted and whether this should be extended to existing drivers and whether it should be renewed periodically.

Councillor O'Rourke outlined his concerns both with ELAP seats and back-loading wheelchair accessible vehicles and explained the difficulties that they can cause. He expressed a preference for side opening wheelchair accessible vehicles.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to consult with the trade and with all interested or affected parties on any proposed amendment to the policy, and to report back to Committee.

659

MAXIMUM AGE FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to determine whether the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licence conditions should be amended to withdraw the requirement for vehicles over 7 years old to be tested and licensed every 4 months.

Prior to the annual taxi meeting, several drivers had requested this amendment and felt that all vehicles over 3 years old should be licensed for 6 months. The Council had given consideration to this, which included carrying out research on the position of neighbouring local authorities. It was noted that where less frequent licensing of older vehicles was required, other restrictions applied including, in some cases, a maximum age limit for vehicles. On balance, the Council's view was that the current system seemed to be working satisfactorily.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the retention of four month licences and make no amendment to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences.

660

HACKNEY CARRIAGE NUMBERS

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking Committee's approval to a consultation on whether the current restrictions on the number of Hackney Carriages licensed by the Council should be maintained.

It was noted that Ribble Valley Borough Council is one of a minority of Councils which impose a maximum restriction on the number of Hackney Carriage licences issued. Best Practice recently issued was that such restrictions should not be imposed. However, if they are imposed then they need to be reviewed regularly and there should be wide-ranging consultation. If challenged, the Council would need to demonstrate that there was no significant unmet demand. This would normally be done by way of an extensive survey, for which there would be cost implications.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to consult all interested parties on whether the current restriction on the number of Hackney Carriage licences issued by the Council should be maintained, and to obtain costings for a survey of unmet demand.

661

HACKNEY CARRIAGE STANDS

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee of the position with regard to Hackney Carriage stands (ranks) and actions being taken by officers.

It was noted that officers were liaising with LCC in relation to possible stands being situated in the vicinity of Holmes Mill, Clitheroe and to two part-time stands being situated in Whalley. Consideration was also being given to identifying any locations in Longridge for the creation of a taxi stand or stands.

662

TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING OPERATIONS

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee of the results of an inspection of licensed private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.

It was noted that in an inspection of six vehicles on 16 November 2023, all were found to be of the required standard.

663 TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE
UPDATED 17 NOVEMBER 2023

Committee noted the contents of the report submitted by the Chief Executive informing them of the publication of best practice guidance in relation to licensing of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles, issued by the Department for Transport and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee on 17 November 2023.

664 TRAINING STANDARD ISSUED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION AND
INSTITUTE OF LICENSING

Committee noted the contents of the report submitted by the Chief Executive informing them of the publication of a training standard by the Local Government Association and the Institute of Licensing.

665 LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR CRIME, POLICING AND FIRE

The Chief Executive submitted a report to Committee distributing a letter circulated by the Alcohol Policy Team of the Home Office dated 15 January 2023, but which had been circulated on 16 January 2024.

666 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES

The minutes of the Sub-Committees held on 27 October 2023 and 16 November 2023 were noted.

667 MINUTES OF ANNUAL TAXI MEETING ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the annual taxi meeting on 28 November 2023 were noted.

668 MINUTES OF EVENT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP MEETINGS

The minutes of the Ribble Valley Event Safety Advisory Group on 30 October 2023 were noted.

669 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items under this heading.

The meeting closed at 7.21 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Jenny Martin jenny.martin@ribblevalley.gov.uk.