

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Licensing Committee

12 November 2013 at 7.30pm

Present:

Councillor B K Blake (Chair)

Councillor L S Marshall-Ascough (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M L Ayling, N Boxall, B J Burgess V S Cumper, C J Mullins, C Oxlade, D M Peck, B J Quinn, D J Shreeves, K Trussell, W A Ward and K B Williamson

Also in Attendance:

Mr Martin Feasey	Secretary (Crawley Hackney Carriage Drivers Association)
Mr Zahid Hussain	Chair (Crawley Hackney Carriage Drivers Association)
Mr Derek Kearnan	Committee Member (Crawley Hackney Carriage Drivers Association)

Officers Present:

Tony Baldock	Environmental Health Manager
Kevin Carr	Principal Lawyer
Mike Lyons	Licensing Officer
Mez Matthews	Democratic Services Officer
Bill Nailen	Licensing Officer

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor C R Eade

7. Members' Disclosure of Interests

No disclosures of interests were made by Members.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 September 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9. Hackney Carriage Fares: 2013-2014

The Committee considered report [PES/128](#) of the Head of Planning and Environmental Services which considered proposals for a requested increase to the Hackney Carriage table of fares for the year 2013-2014. The increase had been requested by the Crawley Hackney Carriage Drivers Association (CHCDA) further to the balloting of its members.

It was noted that although the report detailed an additional request that vehicles carrying more than 4 passengers be entitled to charge Tariff 3 between midnight and 6am, that request had been omitted from the recommendations. It was noted that, should the Committee be agreeable, an additional recommendation relating to that issue be included. It was drawn to the Committee's attention that the CBC licence cost for 2013 detailed in Appendix B to the report included the £50 contribution towards the Unmet Demand Survey, and therefore the actual licence fee increase was 20.8% (and not 38% as suggested).

The Secretary of the CHCDA, Martin Feasey, addressed the meeting and made the following submissions:

- 92 of the 122 CHCDA members had voted on the proposed increase, with 68 (74%) in favour and 24 (26% against);
- A comparison in Hackney Carriage costs could not be fairly drawn between Crawley and Mid Sussex. It was more costly to run a Hackney Carriage vehicle in Crawley as all taxis were required to be white and under 4 years old. Mid Sussex did not operate a colour requirement and Hackney Carriages within its Borough had a maximum age restriction of 14 years old;
- Two of the four Local Authorities cited in the report operated booking fees and some neighbouring Authorities charged extra for additional pick ups. Crawley Hackney Carriages did not charge either of those extra costs;
- Tariff 2 times for Crawley only operated from midnight until 6am. Tariff 2 hours for three of the four Local Authorities operated for longer (one from 2200 until 0700);
- Crawley had restricted/frozen an increase in Tariff 2 over the past 4 years, whereas other Local Authorities had not. The proposed increase would bring Tariff 2 back in line with that of neighbouring Authorities;
- The soilage charge reflected the minimum amount which could be taken to the small claims court. That amount had increased from £55 to £75 and it was therefore proposed that the soilage charge also be increased.

Following a question from the Committee, the Licensing Officer (BN) stated that the £75 soilage charge would be a maximum, and not a minimum, charge.

Concern was raised that Hackney Carriage drivers might lose trade if fares were increased. Several members of the Committee were of the view that the CHCDA's proposal should have provided a comparison between 2012 running costs and that of 2013 (not 2006 and 2013). It was suggested that the CHCDA provide more detailed information in future when requesting an increase. Several Committee members were of the opinion that both fuel and insurance costs had decreased in the past year, and that the figures contained within the proposal did not enable the Committee to make an accurate assessment of how costs had changed over the past year.

Some Committee members expressed the view that fares should stay the same for 2013/14 as, due to the current economic climate many of the Borough's residents were subject to a pay freeze, and that in their opinion fuel and insurance costs had actually decreased over the past year. There was also a perception amongst the

public that Hackney Carriage fares were expensive, although the Committee acknowledged that the perception might not be accurate.

The majority of the Committee supported the proposals and suggested that residents had a choice whether or not to use Hackney Carriages. Several Committee members however, expressed concern that the proposed increase to Tariffs 2 and 3 were extremely high and it was suggested that the CHCDA consider a staged increase over the next few years instead. The Committee discussed the proposed increase to Tariffs 2 and 3 in detail and considered the options available. It was suggested, and agreed by Mr Feasey, that the fares for Tariff 2 remain unchanged. It was noted that the distance of a running mile for all tariffs would be decreased, which would result in an increase in fares for journeys beyond 1,609 metres (1,760 yards).

The Licensing Officer (BN) informed the Committee that the Council had received several complaints about Hackney Carriage drivers overcharging. The Committee noted that it was possible for Hackney Carriage vehicles to operate calendar control meters which would operate at the times specified in the tariff card and so it would not be possible for drivers to overcharge by using the wrong tariff. It was noted that currently 83% of Hackney Carriage meters within Crawley were capable of operating calendar control, although it was acknowledged that it would not be possible to operate the control on vehicles which were capable of carrying more than 4 passengers. The Committee was informed that many Local Authorities only operated two Tariffs. It was proposed that officers work with the CHCDA over the next year to produce a more simplified tariff structure.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the existing table of fares for Hackney Carriage fares be varied as follows:
 - (i) That the starting tariff (for Tariff 1) which is currently £3.80 be increased to £4.00, which would equate to an overall increase of 20p regardless of distance;
 - (ii) That the current "running mile" of £2.11 (on Tariff 1) be increased by 20p to £2.31;
 - (iii) That the waiting time, currently set at £15.00 per hour (on Tariff 1) be increased by 8% to £16.20;
 - (iv) That the current "running mile" of £3.00 (on Tariff 2) be increased by 19p to £3.19;
 - (v) That the current "running mile" of £4.00 (on Tariff 3) be increased by 20p to £4.20;
 - (vi) That Tariff 3 return to double time. That would set Tariff 3 at £8.00 for the first mile;
 - (vii) That the soilage charge be increased from £55.00 to £75.00;
 - (viii) That vehicles carrying more than 4 passengers be entitled to charge Tariff 3 between midnight and 6am.
- (2) That Council Officers, over the next 12 months, work with the Hackney Carriage trade to explore and develop a more simplified tariff structure for 2014/15.
- (3) That a public notice of the proposed variation of fares be published in the local press.

- (4) That should any objection be made to the public notice duly placed, the Committee must meet to consider any objection lodged within the specified time period. If no objection is received that the revised table of fares be implemented on 4 December 2013.

9. Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

B K BLAKE
Chair