

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Monday, 11 November 2019 at 7.30 pm

Councillors Present:

M G Jones (Chair)

M L Ayling (Vice-Chair)

T G Belben, B J Burgess, M Flack, J Hart, K L Jaggard, K McCarthy, J Millar-Smith,
C J Mullins, D M Peck, R Sharma and K Sudan

Officers Present:

Tony Baldock Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

Mez Matthews Democratic Services Officer

Kareen Plympton Health, Safety and Licensing Team Leader

Jess Tamplin Democratic Services Support Officer

Astrid Williams Senior Lawyer (Solicitor)

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors F Guidera and B A Smith

1. Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures of interests were made.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 9 September 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Licensing Sub-Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee listed below were approved as a correct record and signed by the Councillor indicated below:-

Date	Sub Committee Minutes	Minutes signed by
8 October 2019	Application to Review the Premises Licence – Déjà vu Bar, 26-32 High Street, Crawley, (Northgate & West Green Ward).	Councillor Michael Jones (Chair of the Panel)

4. Hackney Carriage Fares 2020-2021

The Licensing Committee considered report [HCS/19](#) of the Head of Community Services, which recommended the Committee consider a variation to the Hackney Carriage table of fares as requested by the Crawley Hackney Carriage Association (CHCA). Due to extensive discussion between the Council's Licensing team and the CHCA regarding the proposed fares, revisions had been made following the initial publication of the report. In light of this, the Committee was asked to consider report [HCS/19a](#), which had been published as a Supplementary Agenda and included a new revised version of the proposed fares (Appendix A of report HCS/19a). This revised version of the proposed fares had been requested by the Chair of the CHCA as the original proposal had not been in line with the CHCA members' requests despite its prior confirmation by the Vice-Chair of the CHCA. The report requested that the Committee consider the proposals put before it and the Committee noted that officers did not specifically recommend adoption nor rejection of those proposals.

Following a query from a Committee member, officers assured the Committee of the legality and validity of the current table of fares. It was clarified that the Committee's previous suggestion regarding the plausibility of a simpler fare tariff had been investigated by Licensing Officers in conjunction with companies responsible for updating taxi meters, but was deemed incompatible with current technology. The Committee discussed the future possibility of encouraging drivers to install up-to-date meters in order to facilitate the introduction of a simpler fare tariff. In response to concerns over the related costs for drivers, the Committee was assured that this would be taken into account by the Council as part of a steady long-term plan. It was clarified that as a 'tool of the trade', any meter-related costs would be met by Hackney Carriage proprietors, not the Council.

As part of a discussion on the proposed new tariff 4 as set out in Appendix A of report HCS/19a, it was noted that a meter button would need to be pressed manually by the driver of a multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) to activate tariff 4 when transporting five or more passengers. The Committee raised concerns over the possibility that groups of fewer than five passengers could be incorrectly overcharged at the tariff 4 rate. In response, officers described the need for a level of trust in Crawley's licensed drivers who had met the 'fit and proper' guidelines. Officers did assure the Committee that any complaints regarding improper usage of tariff 4 would be taken seriously and investigated, and that sanctions could be used when appropriate. The Committee requested that fares continue to be clearly displayed to passengers.

It was clarified to the Committee that passengers with disabilities travelling in an MVP would not be charged the higher tariff 4 fare (when travelling as a group of fewer than five passengers) simply due to the larger size of vehicle potentially required. The Committee also noted that tariff 4 may help to offset any extra running costs incurred with driving a larger vehicle which could encourage drivers to retain their MPVs which added a valuable contribution to the taxi fleet mix, particularly for those passengers with disabilities.

Committee members expressed trust in the CHCA's expertise and understanding of the market and thus its fare proposals, and noted there had been no request to review fares submitted by the taxi trade since September 2017.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed table of fares as set out in Appendix A of report HCS/19a (supplementary agenda) be approved.

2. That the Head of Community Services, or an officer acting on their behalf, be authorised to publish a Public Notice of the variation and the period within which objections can be made (the expiry date of the period to be set by the Head of Community Services but to be no later than 30 November 2019) in accordance with section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
3. That it is noted that should any objections be made following the publication of the Public Notice which are not subsequently withdrawn, the Licensing Committee will be required to meet again to consider those objections. If no objections are received, the variation to the existing table of fares will take effect on the day following the expiry of the objection period.

Note by the Head of Legal, Democracy and HR:

Due to practicality reasons relating to press deadlines it was not possible to meet the agreed Public Notice period ending on the 30 November 2019 as set out in Resolution 2 above. Therefore, in consultation with the Licensing Committee and with the agreement of the Licensing Chair, the revised Hackney Carriage Table of Fares was advertised with the Notice Period ending on 5 December 2019.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Licensing Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.03 pm

M G Jones (Chair)