

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 13 July 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Claire Parris (Chair), Maureen McKay (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Michael Downing, Chris Howells, Graham Lawrence CC, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Maureen McKay, Margaret Notley, Graham Snell, Anne Wells and Tom Wren.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.28pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Nazmin Chowdhury.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 24 MARCH 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 24 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Maureen McKay be elected as Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

4 HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF REVIEW

The Licensing Officer presented a report advising the Committee that the fixing of fares for hackney carriages within the Borough was governed by the Council by virtue of section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. This must be published by means of a tariff table. The last change in fares took effect on 2 April 2022, and a copy of the current tariff table was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Licensing Officer reminded Members that the Committee, at its meeting held on 14 March 2022, had resolved that there should be an annual review of taxi tariffs.

The Licensing Officer stated that the Licensing Authority has undertaken preliminary consultation with the trade (all hackney carriage and private hire drivers and operators) to ascertain options to include in the consultation. A summary of the

results of the preliminary engagement survey was set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

The Licensing Officer explained that the three options agreed for the final consultation had been publicised via a Notice was advertised in the local press on 22 and 29 June 2023, and a copy made available for inspection at the Council offices for the same period in accordance with the legislation. In addition, all licensed drivers and licensed private hire operators in the Council's area were contacted via e-mail or letter advising them of the review consultation.

The Licensing Officer advised that the public notices required any comments or option preferences to be made in writing or through completion of a survey. Comments/option preferences had been received from 72 persons. 51 dual licensed drivers (22 as Hackney Carriage Drivers and 29 as Private Hire Drivers), 1 Private Hire Operator and 20 members of the public. A summary of the consultation survey response was attached as Appendix 6 to the report.

The Licensing Officer commented that Option 1 was to increase the mileage only; Option 2 was to increase the start price and the mileage; and Option 3 was no change to the tariffs. The survey responses to each of these options was set out in the report.

The Licensing Officer stated that the proposed Options 1 and 2 were considered warranted due to costs resulting from the common use of card payment facilities that incurred a transaction fee and the rising costs of living, incorporating fuel, maintenance, replacing vehicles and station permits. He referred to the detail of these rising costs, as set out in Paragraphs 4.6 to 4.8 of the report.

The Licensing Officer explained that in Stevenage hackney carriages were required by licence conditions to be fitted with taximeters. Private hire vehicles may also fit taximeters, and in practice many did, but the tariff only applied by law to hackney carriages. The extant tariff must be programmed into hackney carriage taximeters, which were then bound by the fare displayed on the meter at the end of the journey (ie. they must not charge any more than the figure displayed. Private hire drivers and operators had an interest in the hackney carriage tariff since it may be programmed into their taximeters, but in practice they were entitled to charge any fare they desired, provided it had been agreed with the passenger or passengers before a journey began.

The Committee asked a number of questions, which were answered as follows:

- there were approximately 250 hackney carriage/private hire drivers licensed in the Borough. The 20% response rate from the trade, and the 20 or so from the public, to the consultation compared favourably with the level of responses received from other local authorities, including a recent Transport for London consultation on hackney carriage tariffs which had elicited 823 responses for the whole of Greater London;
- the responses received to the SBC consultation were from a cross-section of the taxi trade; and
- the proposed tariffs applied only to journeys starting and ending in the Borough.

In response to comments made by Members, the Commercial & Licensing Manager agreed to investigate methods to widen the consultation process when consulting on future proposals for hackney carriage tariffs, in order to gather responses from a broader cross-section of the community.

On balance, and in view the rising cost of living, the Committee supported Option 2 (increase the start price and the mileage).

It was **RESOLVED:** that, Option 2 in the report be approved, thereby increasing the initial fare by 20p (£3.60 to £3.80) and Tariffs 1, 2 and 3 by 10%, so that with effect from a suitable date within 2 months from 20 July 2023, the hackney carriage tariffs will be:

- (a) hackney carriage tariff 1 - £3.80 for the first 528 yards, and 20p foreach additional 160 yards (or part thereof), to be applied to hirings between 06:00 and 23:00 hours Monday to Sunday;
- (b) hackney carriage tariff 2 - £5.70 for the first 528 yards, and 30p for each additional 160 yards (or part thereof), to be applied to hirings between 06:00 and 23:00 hours Monday to Sunday and on designated bank/public holidays and Easter Sunday; between 18:00 to 23:00 hours on New Year's Eve; and between 18:00 hours and 24:00 hours on Christmas Eve;
- (c) hackney carriage tariff 3 - £7.60 for the first 528 yards, and 40p for each additional 160 yards (or part thereof), to be applied to hirings between 00:01 and 24:00 hours on Christmas Day and Boxing Day; and between 23:00 hours on New Year's Eve and 06:00 hours on New Year's Day; and
- (d) the following additional charges be imposed:
 - up to two items of baggage or shopping – 20p *
 - three or more items of baggage or shopping – 40p (maximum) *
 - for each person in excess of one – 20p *

(* additional charges should total no more than £2.00, and must be added on the meter at the start of the journey)

- soiling charge (for whatever reason) - £50 (maximum)

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

7 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR