

# LICENSING COMMITTEE



**24 APRIL 2012 - 10:00 AM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs K F Mayor(Chairman),Councillor Mrs V M Bucknor, Councillor D W Connor, Councillor Mrs C R Cox, Councillor M J Curtis, Councillor P Hatton, Councillor M J Humphrey, Councillor B M Keane, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor C C Owen, Councillor R Skoulding.

Kim Winterton (Licensing Team Leader), Ian Hunt (Legal), Jane Webb (Member Services Officer)

## **L12/11      TO SIGN AND CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 2 MARCH 2012**

The minutes of the meeting of 2 March 2012 were confirmed and signed with an amendment made to L11/11 fourth paragraph to state that Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated and not Councillor Mrs Booth stated.

## **L13/11      OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION ON HACKNEY CARRIAGE PROPOSED TARIFFS**

Kim Winterton presented the report reminding Councillors that drivers are able to undercharge but are not able to increase the amount stated by the meter and of the objections raised and responses given to those who had objected during the consultation period.

Councillor Owen asked how many objections had been received to which Kim Winterton stated that five letters of objections had been received from only four people.

Councillor Miscandlon asked when those councils that were similar to Fenland had reviewed their charges. Kim Winterton stated that all the tariffs had been checked this week with half having had a recent update but this change is reliant upon the trade actually requesting an increase.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated it was important to ensure that the people of Fenland did not see a huge increase but also to ensure that Fenland did not lose taxi drivers. Regarding the responses received Councillor Mrs Bucknor was of the opinion that the concern raised about larger vehicles was a reasonable request that had not been addressed. Kim Winterton explained that this was up to the committee to decide the tariff; previously the committee had decided to abolish all extra charges to help the public, by making the tariff easier to read, but if the committee wanted to add a percentage for extra passengers in larger vehicles then this could be done. Previously there had been a problem where the public would not use a larger vehicle for fear of an extra charge therefore whatever is decided will have to be made clear in order for the public to understand.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that larger vehicles should be looked at as it was clearly an issue and that she was concerned with the cost of travel from Wisbech to Kings Lynn hospital. Councillor Curtis stated that there is a FACT bus service available and that maybe this should be promoted rather than adjusting fares accordingly. Kim Winterton explained that there were several bus services available if the public wished to utilise them.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor questioned the point raised by Fenland Taxis that without a booking fee for some journeys then drivers would start refusing to do jobs that did not start, end or go through Wisbech. Kim Winterton explained that drivers must cover the whole of Fenland and it is an offence to refuse a job.

Kim Winterton reiterated to Members that the tariff fare will be the ceiling height that can be charged and many companies will charge under this.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor proposed that an additional charge be incurred for larger vehicles.

Councillor Curtis stated that Dart Taxis had not responded to the consultation and as one of the major companies within Fenland this should be taken into consideration as it shows that this company does not have any objections to the proposal. Councillor Curtis asked if Dart Taxis had larger vehicles to which Kim Winterton replied that they did and explained that the majority of drivers will go with whatever the market forces are and will discount the price. Councillor Curtis stated that the previous tariff of charging for more than two people was wrong and this should be changed to more than four people but not looked at until maybe next year.

Councillor Mrs Mayor stated she was concerned that with the amount of taxi companies in Fenland that only three had responded to the consultation. Councillor Connor stated that Dart Taxis were aware of the consultation as he had spoken to them. Councillor Owen stated that there had probably been no response from the other companies as they are fully satisfied with the proposal.

Councillor Hatton agreed there should be a charge for larger vehicles as these can be used instead of two cars and that he was concerned that the villages would suffer as taxi companies would not be willing to drive from Wisbech for a one mile taxi fare.

Ian Hunt, Legal stated that a Hackney Carriage cannot refuse a job and can only charge once the passenger is inside the vehicle but explained that the Private Hire trade is free to set their own fares. Kim Winterton explained that there are a proportionate amount of private hire to hackney carriage taxis and this it is likely that the private hire will fulfill the village journeys rather than the hackney carriage taxis as they can set their own fares to cover the costs of travelling to the villages.

Kim Winterton explained the proposed tariff (page 32) stating there were three different tariffs and these were because of different time ranges and days and that the only extra would be £80 for the soiling of a carriage. If Members wished to add an extra charge for carrying five or more passengers then she suggested adding 20p extra per passenger as an added extra on the meter. Councillor Mrs Mayor agreed with this suggestion.

Councillor Humphrey asked how many larger vehicles operated in Fenland to which Kim Winterton replied about 10% of the Hackney Carriage trade which is approximately 13 vehicles but that there was a larger proportion within the Private Hire trade.

Councillor Humphrey proposed that the recommendation be accepted with the additional charge of 20p per passenger added to the taxi meter on any vehicle carrying five or more passengers. Councillor Mrs Bucknor seconded the proposal.

**It was DECIDED that:**

- **the Table of Fares be approved; and**
- **on any vehicles carrying more than 4 passengers a charge of 20p per further passenger be added as an extra on the taxi meter.**

#### **L14/11 UPDATE ON TAXI LICENSING CONDITION IMPLEMENTATION.**

Kim Winterton gave an update on taxi licensing condition implementation stating that:

- these came in on 1 April 2012
- it had taken until now to ensure all taxi meters and been calibrated and sealed
- to date just two taxi vehicles had no meter and this was due to repairs currently being carried out on them
- all vehicles had undergone a compliance check resulting in:
  - five immediate stop notices being issued
  - ten referred stop notices being issued requesting any faults be rectified within seven days
  
- meters are all running;
- vehicle top lights all marked up
- a price war is currently underway

Councillor Curtis stated that a price war in the short term would be good for passengers but could result in a reduction of competition. Ian Hunt stated that the Council have no control over price wars and can only set a maximum tariff for Hackney Carriage leaving Private Hire to market forces.

Kim Winterton stated that a logo had been agreed that would be placed on all private hire vehicles and would be implemented shortly.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the Council had been able to investigate if there was a serious problem regarding unlicensed vehicles carrying out airport runs. Kim Winterton stated that work had been carried out with the Police but was proving difficult without an interpreter and Licensing have no powers to take notices down.

Councillor Mrs Cox asked if those operating funeral cars were unhappy that a logo would be placed on private hire vehicles. Kim Winterton explained that they had not received any feedback stating this, but that the current consultation on executive vehicles could resolve this issue

11:10am

Chairman