

# LICENSING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 20 APRIL 2022 - 10.00 AM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Humphrey (Chairman), Councillor R Skoulding (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor A Maul, Councillor Mrs K Mayor and Councillor N Meekins

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor D Connor and Councillor S Wilkes

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Michelle Bishop (Licensing Manager), Andy Fox (Senior Licensing & Compliance Officer), Colin Miles (Legal Representative) and Linda Albon (Member Services & Governance Officer)

## **LIC7/21      PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held 26 November 2021 were approved and signed.

## **LIC8/21      PROPOSED INCREASE TO CURRENT HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE TABLE OF FARES**

Members considered the Proposed Increase to Current Hackney Carriage Vehicle Table of Fares report presented by Andy Fox.

Andy Fox tabled two documents, the current league table of local authorities' hackney carriage fares over a two-mile journey and an email dated 14<sup>th</sup> April from Councillor Patrick that highlights some differences in the published report. Andy Fox explained that Private Hire and Taxi Monthly calculate things slightly differently hence the anomalies alluded to in the email.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Hoy stated although she had read the league table information circulated today, she would not be reading the email as she thought it inappropriate for a councillor with a pecuniary interest to be circulating something to the committee. Meanwhile, based on the report, she feels that an increase is needed. However, costs are increasing, and people are struggling financially, but if we make it unviable for people to become a taxi driver, we will not have any taxis. She feels option A is best. Although it seems a large increase, we must remember that this is the maximum a taxi driver can charge. If a driver wants to be competitive and can do it cheaper, they will be within their rights to do that.
- Councillor Maul said it is clear an increase is needed for taxi drivers especially given increased costs for fuel and FDC charges. However, he had worked out a two-mile journey on tariffs A and B and calculated them to be the same amount of money. Nevertheless, looking at both options, and given that the highest rises relate to late night journeys and bank holidays, it may give drivers some incentive to work in the evenings as for whatever reason it is impossible to get a taxi in the evening in Wisbech. He said he also likes the idea of after 6pm on public holidays and, like Councillor Hoy, is happy to agree with Option A.
- Councillor Skoulding said looking at the charts and seeing the charges of neighbouring authorities, in his opinion Option A would be best.
- Councillor Humphrey said we should remember that this matter is before us at the request of the trade, who have asked us to consider this. Clearly an increase is due. Looking at the chart, there are many authorities who have not reviewed their charges for some time which is a

surprise to him, and he asked if this is the case that fees are not reviewed until a request is made. Michelle Bishop responded that is normally how it works but speaking to colleagues, we are now seeing an increase in requests from the trade to other neighbouring authorities.

- Councillor Humphrey asked Andy Fox to confirm this is the maximum charge. Andy Fox confirmed it is correct that it is the maximum charge; drivers cannot charge more than what appears on the meter, but they can charge less than what shows on the meter.
- Councillor Humphrey said some drivers do not want to see increases and looking at the responses, more favoured Option B. However, he feels Option A at this point is where we should be. Taking it from comments so far, it appears we recommend Option A to be approved at Council.
- Councillor Hoy asked if, bearing in mind we do not look at this annually, we could say we would review this in a year's time, or at least monitor it so if there was a problem, we could look at it again rather than set this in stone for the next five years. Councillor Humphrey responded that it is open to the trade to make a request at any time.
- Andy Fox said most of the local authorities around the country respond to requests from the trade. Some have it as policy that there must be a certain percentage of drivers making that request but some do have an annual increase. If you look at the national league table, some have not had an increase since 2008 and although costs have risen considerably since then, perhaps they operate on a request from the trade.
- Michelle Bishop said that if the Committee wants officers to add it in to look at this on a yearly or two-yearly basis, we can look at the cost of fuel and take that into account.
- Councillor Skoulding said he agreed this would be a good idea. Eventually taxis may be electric and cheaper to run, so it would be good to look at this on a two-yearly basis.

**Proposed by Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Maul and AGREED to approve Option A for a taxi fare increase for referral to Council for ratification and implementation.**

10.19 am

Chairman