



TAXI AND GENERAL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, PENALLTA HOUSE ON THURSDAY, 21ST JUNE, 2018 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT

Councillor D.W.R. Preece - Chair
Councillor J. Simmonds - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

J. Bevan, W. David, M. Davies, K. Etheridge, Ms J. Gale, D.C. Harse, Mrs D. Price,
J. Ridgewell, R. Whiting, L.G. Whittle, W. Williams

Together with:

J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), L. Morgan (Licensing Manager), T. Rawson (Solicitor), R. Furmage (Licensing Officer), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

Mr C. Bundy (Caerphilly County Borough Taxi Drivers Association), Mr C. Evans (Local Taxi Proprietor)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan and D. Cushing.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Prior to the meeting, Councillor D. Cushing declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the report, having a family friend who was representing the taxi trade at the meeting, and therefore was not in attendance. There were no other declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3 PROPOSAL TO INCREASE HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE TARIFFS

The Licensing Manager presented the report, which set out proposals for an increase in the hackney carriage fare tariff, ahead of their presentation to Cabinet to seek approval.

The Taxi and General Committee were advised of requests received from the Caerphilly County Borough Taxi Drivers Association (CCBTDA) and two Hackney Carriage Vehicle Proprietors for the current hackney carriage fare tariff to be increased. As the current tariff has been in place since 2010, this should be reviewed in line with the current economic

climate. The report therefore outlined the details of the requests and how the increase could be achieved.

Members were referred to the information contained in the report and its appendices, including the current tariff, the Council's position within the National Fare Table, a comparison of the two mile tariff across Wales, a comparison of each proposal as suggested by the trade and Licensing Authority demonstrating the prospective fares based on 1 to 5 mile journeys, details of the proposals made by the trade, a draft new tariff based on the most popular proposal, and the Council's Equality Impact Assessment. Members were also given the opportunity to view a letter from the Licensing Department to the trade in respect of the proposals (which was referred to in the report in respect of Appendix D but omitted from the agenda pack).

Officers outlined the consultation undertaken in respect of the proposals and the resultant responses and level of support for each proposal, as set out in Section 4.6 of the report. Proposal 1 consisted of identical suggestions made by the taxi association and one proprietor, whilst Proposals 2 and 3 were submitted by another licensee.

It was noted that the Licensing Department had suggested its own proposal (Proposal 4) as part of the tariff increase exercise, which was supported by the majority of respondents (46 out of 97 respondents which equated to 47.4% of the responses). This would see a tariff increase to fares of between 4%-13%, depending on the relevant tariff period. Members were also asked to note the proposal to amend the range for times of operation relating to Tariffs 1 and Tariff 2 (from 6am and midnight and midnight to 6am respectively, to be amended to 7am to 7pm and 7pm to 7am respectively)

Members were therefore asked to consider the proposals and recommend a preferred option to Cabinet. It was explained that following ratification by Cabinet, and if no objections are received following advertisement in the press for a 14-day period, the fare tariff shall come into effect immediately. If any objections are received then Cabinet will receive a further report to consider these and to approve the fare tariff with or without modification and the date upon this should come into effect.

A representative of the CCBTDA and a local taxi proprietor also addressed the Committee regarding the proposals. They spoke of the need to increase fare tariffs in order to meet their increasing operation costs and provide a reasonable wage for drivers, to create parity with tariffs across other local authorities, and also to level the disparity between their tariffs and the prices charged by competitor transport companies. One speaker also queried the accuracy of the response levels and suggested that some responses had been collectively submitted at a meeting of the CCBTDA on behalf of several drivers and therefore the true percentage of support for some of the proposals could be much higher.

During the course of the ensuing debate, Officers responded to Members' concerns regarding the accuracy of the response levels against each proposal, by providing clarification on the consultation process and the recording process for responses. Discussion took place regarding the number of taxi drivers across the county borough, the number of responses received, and the number of drivers who have membership of the CCBTDA. It was emphasised to the Committee that every licensed driver in the county borough had been consulted on the proposals.

Members discussed whether it might be beneficial to defer the matter in order to seek clarification on the response levels to the consultation and ascertain whether all responses had been received by the Authority and not solely made to the taxi association. Officers outlined the options available to the Committee in this regard but highlighted the need for a recommendation to be made to Cabinet in the near future, given the current economic climate and the fact that there had been no increase to fares since 2010.

Following consideration of the report, and having moved and seconded Proposal 4, an amendment was moved and seconded in that Proposal 1 as set out in the report be recommended as the preferred option to Cabinet. By a show of hands (and in noting that there were 5 for and 5 against with 3 abstentions) and with the casting vote of the Chair, the amendment was declared lost.

The Taxi and General Committee then took the substantive motion in respect of Proposal 4, and by a show of hands (and in noting there were 5 for with 4 against and 4 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

It was therefore RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) Proposal 4 in respect of an increase to the hackney carriage fare tariff as set in the report and Appendix F be approved, to enable the proposal to be advertised in the press for a 14-day period;
- (ii) it be noted that following the consultation period if no objections are received, the fare tariff shall come into effect immediately. If any objections are received then Cabinet will receive a further report to consider these and to approve the fare tariff with or without modification and the date upon this should come into effect.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am