

LICENSING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 4 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Councillors Woodward (Chair); Edwards (Vice-Chair), Carnell, Cresswell, Ennis, Keane, Kitchingham and Page

Apologies: Councillors Challenger, G Dennis, Mitchell and Rowland

6. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Licensing Applications Committee meetings held on 25 May and 12 July 2022 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

7. REVISION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES FOR THE YEAR 2022/23

Further to Minute 5 of the meeting held on 12 July 2022, the Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider whether to reapprove and recommend the proposed increase in hackney carriage fares for the year 2022-23 after objections had been received during the statutory consultation period.

The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix I - Table of fares up to the hearing 12/07/2022 & Table of fares as agreed on 12/07/2022;
- Appendix II - Letter from the chair Reading Taxi Association;
- Appendix III - Objections to the fare increase;
- Appendix IV - Objectors further reasoning and proposal;
- Appendix V - Chart Showing cost of journeys over two miles;
- Appendix VI - September issue of the Private Hire Taxi Monthly (PHTM);
- Appendix VII - Equality Impact Assessment.

The report explained that, following representations made by the RTA, Licensing Applications Committee, on 12 July 2022, had resolved to grant a £1 increase in the flag drop on both tariffs 1 (daytime) and 2 (night-time) from £2.60 to £3.60 and £3.60 to £4.60 respectively and to raise the cleaning charges after soiling to £70 inside the taxi and £25 outside.

The report went on to explain that, as required under Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, a statutory consultation had taken place between 20 July 2022 and 3 August 2022 with an advert being placed in a local paper and the details also published on the RBC website detailing the proposed fare rises. During the consultation period four written objections and a petition against the fare rise from 97(92) Hackney Carriage drivers had been received by the Council.

The report explained that a number of Hackney Carriage drivers had stated that they had not been consulted fully by the RTA, and that the RTA had not been transparent with its members about the issue. The objectors did not agree to the fare increase in the form that was presented to the Licensing Applications Committee on 12 July 2022. The objectors provided further reasoning for their objections along with an alternative proposal for fare rises which was attached to the report at Appendix IV. The report also

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noted that no objections had been received concerning the proposed increase to the soiling charge.

Mr Asif Rashid, Chairman of the Reading Taxi Association, and Mr Imran Ali, a local hackney carriage driver, both attended the meeting with colleagues and addressed the Committee. The RTA spoke in favour of the original fare rise proposal, whilst Mr Ali opposed the original proposal and spoke in favour the alternative proposal.

The Committee indicated that, if the Trade wished to propose future fare rises, it would be sympathetic to reviewing fares on a sixth-monthly basis rather than on the current yearly basis.

Resolved -

- (1) That the decision to recommend that the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection implement an increase of £1 in the flag-drop for both daytime and night-time tariffs be upheld.
- (2) That the decision to recommend that the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection implement an increase in the soiling charge for cleaning taxis to £70 for inside the taxi and £25 for the outside of the taxi be upheld.

8. REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE PLATE CRITERIA

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider and approve updated criteria for the allocation of Hackney Carriage Licence Plates as and when they might become available. A copy of the current criteria, resolved by the Licensing Applications Committee on 4 November 2015 (Minute 3 refers), was attached to the report at Appendix I.

The report highlighted the Licensing team's recommendation that two changes be made to the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Plate Criteria. A copy of the proposed new criteria was attached to the report at Appendix II.

The first proposed change sought to increase the length of time that prospective Hackney Carriage Proprietors' licence holders would need to have held a Reading Borough Council Hackney Carriage Driver's licence from eight (8) consecutive years to 12 consecutive years prior to them showing an expression of interest.

The second proposal required that applicants who successfully met the criteria and were eligible for a Proprietors' licence must provide a brand new ULEV or brand new fully electric purpose-built hackney carriage vehicle for licensing within three months of being permitted to apply for a Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence or the Hackney Carriage Proprietors' licence might be issued to any other person who showed an expression of interest and met the current criteria.

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Asif Rashid, Chairman of the Reading Taxi Association, and Imran Ali, a local taxi driver, both addressed the Committee.

Resolved -

- (1) That the length of time that prospective Hackney Carriage Proprietors' licence holders would need to have held a Reading Borough Council Hackney Carriage Driver's licence remain at eight (8) consecutive years prior to them showing an expression of interest.
- (2) That the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Plate Criteria be amended so that applicants who successfully met the criteria and were eligible for a Proprietors' licence must provide a brand new ULEV or brand new fully electric purpose-built hackney carriage vehicle for licensing within three months of being permitted to apply for a Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence or the Hackney Carriage Proprietors' licence might be issued to any other person who showed an expression of interest and met the current criteria.

(The meeting closed at 7.47 pm)