

Present: Councillor Colin Brotherton (Chairman), Councillor Paul Gleeson (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Richard Austin and Stephen Woodliffe

In attendance: Mr Smedley and Mr Rogerson of the Boston Hackney Carriage Association.

Officers –

Principal Licensing and Land Charges Officer and Senior Democratic Services Officer

## **19 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **20 APOLOGIES**

There were apologies for absence from Councillors David Brown, Maureen Dennis, James Edwards, Jonathan Noble, Felicity Ransome, Stephen Rave, Judith Skinner and Yvonne Stevens.

## **21 REVIEW OF MAXIMUM HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE STRUCTURE**

The Committee considered a report by the Principal Licensing and Land Charges Officer, concerning a request from the Boston Hackney Carriage Association for a review of the hackney carriage maximum fare structure.

The report set out 3 options with respect to the maximum fares for hackney carriages and their impact on the cost of journeys. Option 1 was to make no change to the current maximum fare tariff.

Option 2 was to approve the proposal by the Boston Hackney Carriage Association (BHCA) for an increase in the initial charge (flagfall) only; no increase had been requested for the fares for distance or waiting time. This proposal would increase the cost of every journey, regardless of distance, by £0.40, £0.60 and £0.80 for Tariffs 1, 2 & 3 respectively, resulting in a higher percentage increase for the shorter journeys and a lower percentage increase for the longer journeys.

As an alternative for the Committee to consider, the Principal Licensing and Land Charges Officer suggested Option 3, which would increase the initial charge by £0.30, £0.50 and £0.60 respectively for the three tariffs.

The Committee was advised that it could recommend an alternative option to Cabinet, but any proposed tariff had to be capable of being programmed into a hackney carriage meter. Although the impact of increases might seem quite significant, there had not been an increase for three years.

The Committee was requested to consider the options for a fare increase having regard to the responses to the trade consultation and additional information circulated to the

Committee provided by taxi drivers, setting out earnings, expenditure and hourly rates, and make a recommendation to Cabinet for consideration.

Invited to address the Committee, Mr Smedley explained that overall costs for taxi drivers, operators and owner/operators had increased and most drivers earned below the minimum wage. The BHCA proposal would only address this to a degree; it was not possible to raise earnings above the minimum wage. Most drivers worked 50-60 hours per week to achieve a wage. The information submitted by drivers showed higher earnings when they had been working at night and one showed earnings from working during the day, but before deducting the cost of car insurance and tax, the licence fee, repairs and servicing. Taxi vehicles depreciated very quickly because of their high mileage and that drivers were not being paid for time spent on the rank or out on the road between paid journeys.

In response to questions, the Principal Licensing and Land Charges Officer confirmed that some tariffs were applied automatically and the taximeters did not allow drivers to overcharge. The information submitted by drivers took into account the cost of buying the taxi. The number of drivers had increased year on year, though not significantly in the last 12 months; there did not seem to be a shortage of drivers. Limiting numbers would be contrary to guidance. The number of hours worked included time spent on the rank and travelling to and from a pick-up and drop off. The trade tended to apply for increases every few years, rather than small amounts annually, due to the cost of re-calibrating taximeters.

During debate, Members supported Boston Hackney Carriage Association's suggested increase. It was recognised that drivers and operators provided an important service to the community and faced significant costs. Services needed to be sustainable and, though increases had to be affordable for users, it was considered that the proposal was reasonable. It was felt that the alternative proposal would make minimal difference.

**RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet to approve Option 2, as proposed by the Boston Hackney Carriage Association, to increase the initial charge of the hackney carriage maximum fare structure by £0.40, £0.60 and £0.80 for Tariffs 1, 2 & 3 respectively.**

The Meeting ended at 3.32 pm