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Licensing Committee

18 MARCH 2019

PRESENT: Councillor J Brandis (Chairman); Councillors T Mills (Vice-Chairman), M Hawkett, A Huxley, L Monger, S Morgan, G Powell, S Renshell, B Russel and Sir Beville Stanier Bt (ex-Officio)

APOLOGIES: Councillors S Lambert

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2019 be approved as a correct record.

2. AYLESBURY HACKNEY CARRIAGE REVISED FARES PROPOSAL

The current tariff for hackney carriage fares operating in Aylesbury Town had last been reviewed in April 2010. Rural hackney carriage fares had been reviewed in November 2016. The Aylesbury Carriage Taxi Association, the organisation that represented taxi drivers operating in Aylesbury Town, had proposed a new tariff. The proposals had been considered by the Licensing Committee on 11 December 2018. At that meeting, Members found anomalies with the figures proposed and felt clarification was needed so the Committee resolved for this to come back in 2019. Since then, the Principal Licensing Officer had met with representatives from the Aylesbury Hackney Carriage Association and new fares had been prepared. The Committee report outlined a new schedule of proposed fares across various Tariffs depending on the day and time and the Principal Licensing Officer highlighted the main changes to Members. This included the removal of a luggage charge, as most hackney carriages had capacity, and the reasonable inclusion of a soiling of vehicle charge. Aylesbury Vale currently had one of the lowest hackney carriage fares in the country. Even with the proposed changes, Aylesbury Vale would continue to present one of the cheapest fares for an average two mile journey when compared to other local authority areas.

Local authorities had the power to set fares for hackney carriages under section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. When making changes to the fares, the Council must publish in at least one local newspaper the proposed tariff for a period of 14 days minimum and invite objections. A copy of the notice would also be available for inspection at the council offices. Any objections received and not withdrawn during this period would be reported to the Committee for consideration. The ultimate decision was made by the Cabinet Member, however historically the Licensing Committee were consulted on this.

Members sought more information and were advised that:-

- i. A higher tariff had previously been agreed for 'rural' Hackney Carriages operating outside of Aylesbury Town Centre because they typically cover further distances. The higher rural tariff was to off-set the number of 'dead miles' which was described as those miles when no passenger was being carried.
- ii. The figures proposed by the Aylesbury Carriage Taxi Association were believed to be a reasonable increase, particularly given as there has been no change for nearly nine years.
- iii. Aylesbury Vale did have a unique two tariff system of urban and rural rates. The type of tariff used would depend on the vehicle. Black taxis (white plates)

- operated to the Aylesbury Town tariff and the white taxis (red plates) operated to the rural tariff.
- iv. Officers had considered that the proposed increase was generally less than the inflationary adjusted figure and had discussed this with representatives from the ACTA. The ACTA were concerned that if fares were too high then this would put them at a competitive disadvantage. Officers preferred to be led by the trade in considering revised fare proposals, providing they were reasonable. Interested parties had the opportunity to respond to the consultation.
 - v. Deliberate avoidance of the soiling charge would be a criminal offence. Having this fare included in the fares would give drivers the ability to charge customers for soiling the vehicle if appropriate.

Members felt that the soiling charge could be considered a low amount given the cost for cleaning and potential loss of income whilst this took place. Additionally and for the avoidance of customer doubt, if the proposals went ahead then the Committee saw merit in there being signage inside Hackney Carriages to advise customers of the soiling charge.

RESOLVED –

- i. The Principal Licensing Officer be authorised to conduct the statutory consultation as per the recommendation.
- ii. If no objections are received during the consultation then the Principal Licensing Officer progress to adopt the new tariff in conjunction with the Cabinet Member.
- iii. If any objections are received and not withdrawn then they are reported to Licensing Committee for their consideration.

At the meeting's conclusion, Councillor Mrs Brandis advised that this would likely be her last meeting as the Chairman of the Licensing Committee and thanked Members and the Principal Licensing Officer for their work.