

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Licensing Committee** held remotely via Zoom on **Monday 25 January 2021 at 6:30 pm**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Edward Back, Councillor Jocelyn Bond, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Tony Goldson, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Frank Mortimer, Councillor Mark Newton, Councillor Keith Robinson, Councillor Steve Wiles

Other Members present:

Councillor Mary Rudd

Officers present: Katherine Abbott (Democratic Services Officer), Teresa Bailey (Senior Licensing Officer), Chris Bing (Legal and Licensing Services Manager), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Trish Mortimer and Councillor Keith Patience.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 19 October 2020

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Hackney Carriage Fares in East Suffolk

The Legal and Licensing Services Manager summarised report **ES/0649** which provided an overview of current Hackney Carriage fares in East Suffolk. The Committee was informed that there were currently two tariff tables operating within East Suffolk, one

in the north of the district and one in the south (the former Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Council areas). The report sought the Committee's agreement to consult with the trade on whether to leave the existing arrangements in place or to adopt one tariff table for the whole district.

Councillor Robinson asked when the last increase to the tariff in the north; the Legal and Licensing Manager said this had been in September 2012 and that the last increase in the south was in November 2020.

Councillor Newton asked about the sequencing of the proposed consultation. The Legal and Licensing Manager replied that, if approved, an informal consultation, outside of the statutory framework, would have more discretion in the period of the consultation, but four to six weeks was reasonable. He stated that, if approved, all hackney carriage drivers and operators would be consulted and the resulting report would be submitted for consideration at the meeting of the Committee in April. The Chairman asked to be kept advised of the timescales and any variation to the timing of a report to Committee.

The Chairman invited the Committee to debate.

Councillor Goldson stated that tariffs in the north were lower priced but there was, he said, more deprivation in the north. He continued to state that the south of the district was more affluent. Councillor Goldson considered it was for the trade to approach the Council and not to impose.

Councillor Robinson said it was a concern that, potentially, many taxi drivers were working at the same tariff rate despite increased costs and that, consequently, he considered the standard of vehicle used to be declining. He added that if one company raised its prices, it became uncompetitive as other companies remained at the original price. Councillor Robinson said that he welcomed a consultation on the sensible amalgamation and alignment of fees.

Councillor Newton said he was pleased a consultation was proposed and was confident it would produce a good result.

Councillor Wiles stated that he felt the industry was best placed to decide on tariffs and it had not requested a change.

Councillor Mortimer said he welcomed the proposed consultation. Councillor Ashdown agreed and said it would be a valuable opportunity to hear the opinions of operators and drivers on this matter.

Councillor Cloke asked how many responses to the last consultation had been received; the Senior Licensing Officer said a small number of replies had been received to a consultation on the drug testing policy. Councillor Coulam asked if an improved rate of response was anticipated for the proposed consultation. The Senior Licensing Manager said that the proposed consultation was on a matter with a potential direct effect on hackney carriage drivers and therefore it was reasonable to expect a healthy number of replies. In response to a question by Councillor Coulam, the Legal and Licensing Services Manager confirmed that consultees would be all hackney carriage drivers and

companies but not private hire drivers; she also confirmed that consultees would be provided with all relevant information on the two tariff tables and the differences highlighted.

Councillor Coulam said she was disappointed private hire drivers would not be consulted. The Legal and Licensing Services Manager said that this would necessitate a much broader scope of consultation and this could not be completed by April.

There being no further questions or matters raised for debate, the Chairman moved to the recommendations. These having been proposed and seconded, by unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED

That a consultation be undertaken by Licensing Services with the hackney carriage trade be on the matters detailed below be approved:

1. whether to leave the existing two tariff table arrangement in place or to adopt one tariff table for the whole of the district in East Suffolk;
2. if one tariff table is to be adopted, whether the one tariff table should be the current tariff table in the North, the current tariff table in the South or a new tariff table with tariffs possibly set at the mid-point between the two tariff tables where there is a difference; and
3. whether it should be left to the trade, which is the current custom and practice in East Suffolk, to trigger fare reviews when they consider that an increase is appropriate and that the market can sustain an increase without demand for taxis being adversely affected; or alternatively moving to a system whereby the licensing authority periodically reviews licensing fares and consults on revised fare tables with proposed fares increased in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI).

5 Department of Transport Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards

The Senior Licensing Officer summarised report **ES/0650** which advised the Committee of the Department of Transport's new *Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards* and sought approval for a full review of current policy and procedure to determine the necessary amendments required by the new Standards. The Senior Licensing Officer stated that, if so approved, proposals would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee, in April, to seek approval to undertake a public consultation.

The Chairman invited questions.

Councillor Mortimer asked if there was a Council policy for the pandemic. The Senior Licensing Officer said that the Government had issued guidance but there was no policy. Councillor Mortimer asked how non-compliance with the guidance would be enforced. The Senior Licensing Officer said it was not the Council's responsibility to take enforcement or issue fines etc. for non-compliance with guidance. She explained that, under the guidance, it was mandatory for a passenger to wear a mask while riding in a taxi but it was not mandatory for the driver to do so. The driver was at liberty to accept a passenger or to refuse if, for example, they declined to wear a mask.

Councillor Coulam asked about the Council's proposals for CCTV/video equipment within vehicles. The Legal and Licensing Services Manager said the views of the trade on this, including the balance between public safety and implications for individuals' privacy and cost, would be most welcome.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That, having noted the report including the Department of Transport's Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards, at Appendix A, a full review of current policy and procedure to determine the necessary amendments required by the new Standards was approved

6 Issued Licenses in East Suffolk, an overview of the work of the Licensing Sub-Committee, and Licensing enforcement matters

The Legal and Licensing Services Manager summarised report **ES/0651** which provided an overview of the current number and type of licences issued by East Suffolk Council. The report also summarised the applications received and the work of the Licensing Sub Committee from October to December 2020.

There were no questions or matters raised for debate. The Chairman wished to record his thanks, on behalf of the Committee to the Officers for their excellent work.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote

RESOLVED

That, having considered the report and its contents, it be noted

7 Exempt and Confidential Item

RESOLVED

That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act

8 License Appeal Report: Mr K v East Suffolk Council, Great Yarmouth Magistrates' Court (October 2020)

- Information relating to any individual.
- Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

The Meeting concluded at 7.23pm

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