

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 31 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillors Brindle, English, Garten, Joy, M Rose,
Springett (Chair) and Trzebinski

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Cooke, Fort, Hinder, Naghi, Mrs Robertson and J Sams.

63. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

64. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

65. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

66. VISITING MEMBERS

There was no Visiting Members.

67. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All Councillors had been lobbied on Item 11 – Hackney Carriage Fare Increase 2022-23.

68. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

69. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 MARCH 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2022 be agreed as a correct record and signed.

70. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from Members of the public.

71. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

72. HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE INCREASE 2022-23

As Mr Neil Cox had intended to address the Committee but was unable to attend, the Chair read out a statement on his behalf.

The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report and highlighted the fare increase requested by the Hackney Carriage Trade within Appendix 1 to the report. If agreed, the fares would be implemented from April 2022. The last fare increase was agreed in July 2020.

As the significant increase in the cost of fuel and electricity had contributed to the trade's request, the Senior Licensing Officer outlined recent figures for inflation rates, the consumer price index and fuel costs. Several other Local Authorities (LA) in Kent had recently raised their Hackney Carriage fares including Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling district councils, with reviews to take place at Folkstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells district councils.

In response to questions, the Senior Licensing Officer explained the different tariffs operated by the trade. It was confirmed that the fare increase would be in 20p increments in accordance with Appendix 3 to the report, rather than as shown within table 5 of the report. Following receipt of a request to increase fares, the proposed fares were compared with the tariffs of other Kent LAs to determine its reasonability.

During the debate, a flat rate increase to the fare surcharge was considered. In response, The Lawyer (Contentious) stated that the trade had requested an increase in fares rather than the surcharge and reiterated the government guidance that fare scales should be designed with a view to its practicality and transparency of the process. The process for advertising the fare increase, if agreed, was outlined.

The Committee felt that it would be simpler to implement the fare increases as requested by the trade. In response to questions, the Lawyer (Contentious) stated that best practice suggested that a fare review would usually take place annually. However, it was felt that the review should take place after six-months of the fare's implementation due to the unusual circumstances surrounding the increased cost of living and fuel, alongside consultation with the trade on how to manage such situations in the future.

RESOLVED: That

1. The table of fares as set out in Appendix 3 to the report be agreed, with the intention to review the fares after six-months;
2. The Head of Housing and Community Services be authorised to give public notice of the Council's intention to fix this table of fares for

Hackney Carriage vehicles in accordance with Section 65(2) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to take effect from April 2022;

3. Should objections be received, the matter be brought back to the Committee for consideration within two months of publication; and
4. A consultation be undertaken with the Hackney Carriage trade, to ascertain a method of dealing with future fuel emergency crises.

73. DURATION OF MEETING

2.30 p.m. to 3.20 p.m.