

LICENSING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

12 December 2006

Attendance:

Councillors:

Mather (Chairman) (P)

Baxter (P)
Berry (P)
Howell (P)
Hammerton (P)
Izard (P)
Johnston (P)
Love (P)

Pearce (P)
Ruffell (P)
Sutton (P)
Wagner
Weston (P)
Wood (P)
Wright (P)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Wagner.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 24 October 2006 be approved and adopted.

3. **MINUTES OF THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE HELD 24 NOVEMBER 2006**
(Report LR206 refers)

The Committee received the minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 24 November 2006 (attached as Appendix A to the minutes).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 24 November 2006 be received and noted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Steve Eckton and Mr Martin Dade, representing Winchester taxi and private hire drivers, raised issues including fare charges and the number of licence plates, which are outlined in the minutes below.

5. **REVIEW OF FARES FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES**
(Report LR203 refers)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Eckton explained to the Committee that taxi drivers in the Winchester District had requested a ten pence increase in the pull-off charge, which would assist drivers in meeting their maintenance charges, as well as their fuel costs and would keep the rise at the rate of inflation. There would be no change to mileage charges, which would not encourage more drivers to the Winchester area. In response to questions, Mr Eckton stated that, in his opinion, there were too many licences granted and that, as a result, drivers had to work increased hours to earn the same. Many drivers had also taken on schools contracts.

The Licensing and Registration Manager stated that taxi work had been lost due to the introduction of the over 60s travel card. This, coupled with other increases in costs, meant that it was difficult for full-time drivers to earn a full-time income. In response to questions, the Licensing and Registration Manager reported that current legislation did not restrict working hours.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the statutory requirements for advertising and dealing with objections, the fares which may be charged by Hackney Carriages in the area of Winchester City Council be varied with effect from 1 January 2007 as follows, which produces a fare of £3.60 for the first mile and £1.80 for each subsequent mile:

i) Distance

For the first 660 yards (603 metres) or part thereof, £2.40

For each succeeding 200 yards (183 metres) or part thereof, 20p

ii) Waiting Time

For each period of 1 minute, 25p

iii) Extra Charges

For each hiring which commences between 11pm and 6am or at any time on bank holidays and public holidays, or after 6.30pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve 50% of the above rate of fare

Fouling charge, £40.00

6. **APPLICATIONS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER LICENSES – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**
(Report LR205)

The Licensing and Registration Manager explained that the report had been prepared as a result of discussions with taxi drivers and a review of existing conditions, policies and procedures. The report would be the first of a series of reports, dealing with various parts of the licensing regime in relation to taxis and private hire vehicles. The above report covered the principles behind driver licensing, as well as bringing to Members' attention guidance published by the Department of Transport.

The Licensing and Registration Manager commented that, in broad terms, the Council's practices complied with this guidance, although updating of conditions and policies was required. In response to a Member's question, he continued that not all taxis were wheelchair capable (although new licences were only issued for wheelchair capable vehicles), although many customers preferred the choice which was available to them by retaining saloon cars in the fleet. Mr Eckton confirmed that there were currently 76 wheelchair accessible vehicles available to those customers who required them.

During discussion, the Licensing and Registration Manager explained that the Council would have to show that there was no unmet demand for taxis, before restricting the number of licences granted. By 2011, it was expected that legislation would remove any remaining restrictions on the number of plates. Applicants for driver's licences in Winchester had to complete a series of four tests: a knowledge test, driving test, CRB clearance and a medical. He confirmed that, although the Council always had a large number of applicants for the knowledge test, many did not pass this stage and that no licences had been granted recently. It was agreed to bring information to the next full meeting of the Licensing and Regulation Committee regarding the number of licenses granted year on year.

Members discussed the possibility of introducing a practical knowledge test (i.e. requiring the applicant to demonstrate his/her knowledge by driving certain test routes, rather than the current desk-top exercise). The Licensing and Registration Manager stated that this had already been considered, but that it would be a time-consuming exercise which could not currently be implemented.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Policies and Procedures for Applications for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licenses, as set out in Appendix A to Report LR205, be approved as a draft document for consultation with relevant representatives of the taxi and private hire trade and other appropriate consultees.

2. That the Guidance issued by the Department of Transport be noted and taken into account in future reviews of policies, conditions and byelaws on taxi and private hire licensing.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.45pm

Chairman