

LICENSING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE

3 December 2008

Attendance:

Councillors:

Mather (Chairman) (P)

Baxter (P)

Berry (P)

Biggs (P)

Evans

Hammerton (P)

Hiscock (P)

Howell (P)

Izard (P)

Jackson (P)

Johnston (P)

Lipscomb (P)

Mason (P)

Read (P)

Weston (P)

Wright (P)

Deputy Members:

Councillor Love (Standing Deputy for Councillor Evans)

Officers in Attendance

Mr H Bone (Head of Legal Services)

Miss C Stefanczuk (Assistant Licensing & Registration Officer)

Mr C Bicknell (Assistant Licensing & Registration Officer)

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That subject to an addition to the minutes to show that Councillor Wright was appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee for the 2008/09 Municipal Year, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 19 June 2008, be approved and adopted .

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Steve Eckton, the Chairman of Winchester Taxi and Private Hire Association, explained that in July 2008, a survey of 58 drivers had been undertaken. The general consensus had been that a fare increase was not feasible as, due to the current economic downturn, drivers were already losing business. A further meeting in November had reached the same conclusion.

He requested that fares were maintained at their current levels and that a review be undertaken in six months.

Mr Paul Smith, Managing Director of Wessex Cars, summarised views of the organisation. He confirmed that the majority of his 60 drivers sought a small increase in charges, as outlined in Appendix 2 of Report LR285, and they did not believe that this would have a negative effect on trade.

Mr John Boardman, a Hackney Carriage driver, gave details on the current work availability in the area. He explained workloads had been condensed due to drivers replacing their smaller 4 seater vehicles with 5-6 seaters. In addition to this, vehicles capable of transporting wheelchairs held up to eight people, as opposed to a previous seat capacity of five. He believed that a small price increase would not assist any driver who was considering ceasing trade and asked that the Committee freeze fares at the current rates.

The Chairman thanked Mr Eckton, Mr Smith and Mr Boardman for their representations and invited them to remain in the meeting, so that they could have regard to the Committee's discussion and answer any questions on Report LR285 below.

3. **MINUTES OF THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE HELD 29 JULY 2008 (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX)**
(Report [LR286](#) refers)

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 29 July 2008 (less exempt appendix) (attached as Appendix A to the minutes).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 29 July 2008 (less exempt appendix) be received and noted.

4. **MINUTES OF THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE HELD 3 NOVEMBER 2008**
(Report [LR287](#) refers)

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 3 November 2008 (attached as Appendix B to the minutes).

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 3 November 2008 be received and noted.

5. **REVIEW OF FARES FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES**
(Report [LR285](#) refers)

The Assistant Licensing and Registration Officer introduced the Report and explained that the current fare increase had taken effect on 1 March 2008 and that Members had requested a six month review of the charges. At a meeting held on 1 July 2008, Hackney Carriage Drivers had been consulted and had concluded that any increase was likely to lead to a further reduction in trade. Whilst it was accepted that the future economic situation was unpredictable, it was agreed that fuel, maintenance and insurance costs were rising and many drivers were considering finding alternative employment. Drivers believed that any fare increase was likely to result in the public finding a cheaper method of transport leading to an additional decline in trade.

During questions, a Member queried why the fouling charge had remained at £40 for nine years and whether an increase could be imposed here. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Eckton explained that drivers could not enforce this charge and it was already difficult to obtain payment of the current fee from passengers. Drivers were allowed to refuse an intoxicated or threatening passenger, but this was a matter of judgement that only experience could bring.

A Member asked how the previous taxi increase had impacted on drivers. Mr Eckton explained that the rise occurred prior to the current economic downturn and that whilst the fare increase had helped as fuel prices rose, there was also now a general reduction in trade overall. He also clarified that across the southern region there was a variety of fares and that fares in the Winchester area, for example, were higher than those in Eastleigh.

At conclusion of the discussion, Members agreed that an increase in charges at this time would not be appropriate due to the likelihood of further economic downturn and the fact that general costs were already high. Concerns were raised that those reliant on taxis, such as the elderly, may already be struggling to meet higher living costs. Members requested that the fares be reviewed again in six months' time to discuss whether an increase would then be appropriate.

RESOLVED:

That no fare increase take place at this time and a review be undertaken after a six month period.

6. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Minutes of Licensing Sub Committee held 29 July 2008 (Exempt Appendix)) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 1 & 3 Schedule 12A refers)

7. **EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE HELD 29 JULY 2008**

The Committee considered the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 29 July 2008 (attached as Appendix A to the minutes).

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 29 July 2008 be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.00pm

Chairman