

Minutes of a meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee on Tuesday 22 September 2020

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Committee members present:

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| Councillor Clarkson (Chair) | Councillor Cook (Vice-Chair) |
| Councillor Corais | Councillor Gotch |
| Councillor Tanner | Councillor Upton |
| Councillor Wade | Councillor Wolff |

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Daniel Smith, Lawyer
Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager
Joshua Curnow, Senior Licensing Compliance Officer
John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Taylor

In the temporary absence of the Committee's Chair and the absence of the Vice-Chair, the Committee nominated and seconded the temporary appointment of Councillor Cook as Chair of the meeting.

7. Declarations of Interest

None.

8. Variation (increase) of the current Hackney Carriage Tariffs (table of fares)

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to consider an application for a variation of the current Hackney Carriage Table of Fares from the City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association (COLTA).

The Senior Licensing Compliance Officer introduced the report which sought agreement to consult on the proposals from the COLTA, the consequences of which were set out in the report's appendices. The fares had last been varied in 2014.

Councillor Clarkson joined the meeting at this point and took over as Chair.

Mr Ahmed addressed the Committee in his role as Chair of the COLTA which had refrained from requesting any increases since 2014 in the light of “recession and austerity”. Providers of Hackney Carriages had since been faced with considerable increases in the costs of living in parallel with the expectation of significant financial investment in the improvement of the vehicles themselves. Other public transport providers had increased their fares during this period. The COLTA proposals were underpinned by a wish to “modernise and simplify” the tariff structure. Of particular concern to COLTA was a wish to introduce a more consistent approach to the determination of fares for journeys beyond the city boundary. The current system of negotiation resulted in inconsistency and the process of which was sometimes impractical and, on occasions, embarrassing, for the passenger(s). The current generation of digital fare meters enable the swift and easy determination of different fare structures which would facilitate the COLTA proposal which would in turn increase the confidence of the travelling public.

The Solicitor reminded the Committee that its jurisdiction over the determination of fares only extended to fares within the city boundary and there was no power to determine fares for journeys beyond the boundary.

Notwithstanding the inability to prescribe fares to be used outside the city, it was noted that there was no reason why the COLTA should not come to a voluntary agreement with its members to introduce such a scheme. The Committee agreed that it would support the principle of such an agreement, while being clear that it would be on an entirely voluntary basis with no means of subsequent enforcement.

In discussion about the proposed fare increases it was agreed that they were generally reasonable but at the same time noted that, in some cases, might run the risk of reduced the use of Hackney Carriages in favour of other transport options.

The process for reviewing the fare structure of Hackney Carriages could be triggered by the profession itself or any member of the public. It was agreed that this continued to be appropriate and that, on balance, there would be no benefit in instituting a regular Council led review.

Having considered the COLTA application and taken account of the discussion, the Committee resolved to:

1. **Instruct** the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance to carry out the statutory requirement of a public consultation on the proposed table of fares variation;
2. **Delegate** to the Chair and the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety to consider any response to the proposed variation before recommending to Council such change to the table of fees as necessary; and
3. **Note** its support for the principle of the introduction of a voluntary scheme by the COLTA to improve the consistency of fares for journeys beyond the city boundary.

9. Minutes

The Committee resolved to approve that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2020 be APPROVED as a true and accurate record.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 04 February 2021.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.30 pm

ChairDate: Thursday 4 February 2021