

MINUTES OF THE
REGULATORY COMMITTEE

held on 9 June 2022 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor L. Mascot (Chair)

Councillors R.H. Ambor, L. Ashley, D.J.R. Clark, A.E. Davidson, D.G. Jones, J.A. Frasca, R.J. Lee, I.C. Roberts and T.E. Roper

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. J. Scott.

Election of Vice Chair

The Committee considered an additional item at this point in the meeting, to elect a Vice Chair for 2022/23. Councillor David Jones was re elected as Vice Chair.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Interests

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

4. Public Question Time

Two members of the taxi trade attended the meeting to present the petition for Item 5 and spoke at that point in the meeting. No other questions or statements were received within the 24 hour notice period ahead of the meeting.

5. Application for an increase in fares (Tariff) charged by Hackney Carriages

The Committee were asked to consider a request submitted for an increase in the Hackney Carriage Fares. They were asked to determine whether or not to approve the proposed fares and tariffs in Appendix F for wider consultation. It was noted that if any objections were received that these would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee were informed that the last review was in September 2020 but since then inflation and fuel prices had continued to increase leading to the request being

made. The Committee noted that the initial petition had been joined by a second one relating to a separate tariff for the number of passengers using a taxi. It was noted that this would essentially add a surcharge to a tariff when a vehicle is used by five or more persons, it was noted that this approach was already taken elsewhere in Essex. This had been petitioned for, because larger vehicles were more costly to purchase and operate.

Members were informed that if the increase was approved, the proposals would be published in a local newspaper and online for a minimum period of 14 days to allow objections to be received.

The Committee heard from two members of the taxi trade who had put forward the petition for an increase in fares, the petition had included the supporting information that had led to the request. This supporting information was detailed in the appendices to the report and included data around fuel increase costs and comparisons with other authorities. The following points were made to the Committee;

- The increase had been requested due to the significant rise in fuel costs and the general cost of living crisis.
- Multi seater vehicles were half of the fleet but due to the higher costs the number of vehicles had been lowering in recent years and without a change to the tariffs this would only become worse. It was important that these vehicles were still cost viable to run as they provided important access to the public.
- The nationwide fares included in the report were from February so it was likely that many other authorities had already increased their fares in the meantime

In response to points raised by members of the Committee, officers clarified that if approved, during the consultation period a higher increase could be requested by members of the taxi trade if it was felt necessary.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals and for the 14-day consultation period to start on the 16th June.

RESOLVED that the fares and tariff in Appendix F be approved, with the Director of Public Places being authorised to take the necessary steps to commence the consultation period.

(7.02pm to 7.18pm)

6. Taxi Criminal Conviction Policy Amendment

The Committee received a report asking them to amend the current Convictions Policy to include reference to convictions in respect of the use of handheld devices. The Committee heard that this had been directed by the Department for Transport Statutory Standards issued in July 2020. It was noted that Annex C on page 36 of the DfT document required a conviction policy to include as follows:

Using a hand-held device whilst driving

Where an applicant has a conviction for using a held-hand mobile telephone or a hand-held device whilst driving, a licence will not be granted until at least five years have elapsed since the conviction or completion of any sentence or driving ban imposed, whichever is the later.'

Officers informed the Committee that same already applied in respect of convictions for other serious offences such as drink driving. Officers also clarified that this would only affect new applications or late renewal applications.

RESOLVED that the existing convictions policy be updated to include the below section from the Department for Transport's Statutory Standards with emphasis that the policy initially relates to a 'new grant' application and that any disciplinary matters are each assessed on their own merit.

'Using a hand-held device whilst driving

Where a new applicant has a conviction for using a held-hand mobile telephone or a hand-held device whilst driving, a licence will not be granted until at least five years have elapsed since the conviction or completion of any sentence or driving ban imposed, whichever is the later.'

(7.19pm to 7.25pm)

7. Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.26pm

Chair