

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **General Purposes Committee** held in the Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Thursday, 22 September 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs R Crowe (Chairman)
Councillor I Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor P Harris, Councillor R Jackson,
Councillor S Saddington, Councillor T Thompson, Councillor T Wildgust
and Councillor Mrs Y Woodhead

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Brazier (Committee Member), Councillor M Cope (Committee Member), Councillor Mrs S Michael (Committee Member), Councillor K Walker (Committee Member) and Councillor R White (Committee Member)

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

NOTED that no Member or Officer declared any interest pursuant to any statutory requirement in any matter discussed or voted upon at the meeting.

10 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

The Chairman advised that the proceedings were being recorded by the Council and that the meeting was being livestreamed and broadcast from the Civic Suite, Castle House.

11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2022

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held 23 June 2022 were a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12 GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN (OCTOBER 2022 TO SEPTEMBER 2023)

The Committee considered and noted the Forward Plan from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Forward Plan be noted and that the following items be added:

- i. Findings of Review of Taxi Fares (March 2023)
- ii. Possible Changes to the Livery of Hackney Carriage Vehicles (June 2023)

13 URGENT REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to update Members on the taxi fare review carried out and the options put forward for consideration. The report set out the results of the consultation on the proposed fare increase.

It was reported that the majority of comments had not been supportive of the proposed change to increase the basic cost represented on the taximeter prior to the journey commencing (the flag) by £1.00 with most respondents preferring a larger increase in fares. Paragraph 2 of the report set out the 3 options before Members for consideration.

In considering the report Members noted the comments of the respondents and that only 7 out of a potential 136 taxi drivers had replied to the consultation. The Business Manager advised that any increase needed to be balanced between still offering a fair price to the customer but also assisting the trade.

A Member queried whether it would be possible to progress the proposed increase as set out in Option 1 but then undertake a further review. The Business Manager advised that the cost of recalibrating the metre would be met by the Council but that the responsibility for any further costs would be a decision for the Committee. He also advised that if Members proposed alternative amendments these would need to be readvertised and consulted on again with the trade.

Members discussed the need to find a suitable balance to any changes, noting that a £1 increase on the flag was a relatively high percentage on £2.90. It was suggested that consideration also be given to lengthening the evening hours, subsequent mileage charges and the soiling charge.

Members also noted that any change to the metre had to be carried out in Nottingham and queried whether it was possible for it to be done within the district. The Business Manager advised that the company who carried out the work was based in Nottingham, but enquiries could be made as to whether it was possible for them to do this elsewhere.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the standard rate (Tariff 1) of £2.90 be increased by £1.00 to £3.90;
- b) the cost of recalibrating the taximeter to £3,90 would be met by the Council; and
- c) a full review of the current taxi fares be undertaken with immediate effect, such review to include all charges, with a report being presented to the March 2023 meeting of the Committee.

14 HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE LIVERY IN NEWARK & SHERWOOD

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to update Members on the review of the current specification for the livery of Hackney Carriage Vehicles together with options for consideration.

The report set out the current controls in relation to vehicle specification requirements contained within the Taxi Policy, specifically advertising and taxi signage. Paragraph 2 of the report set out the proposals and options considered with a recommendation that no change be made to the livery of both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.

In considering the report Members noted the comments of the Business Manager that any change to vehicle specifications for Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicles would be a financial burden on the trade.

In noting the comments, a Member stated that it was very difficult for a member of the public to know whether a taxi they were using was local to the area or from elsewhere and that a distinctive external livery would enable them to know. In acknowledging the current cost of living crisis he suggested that the trade be given an indication that the Council were considering the measure. He added that it would also be beneficial if signage inside the vehicle enabled passengers to identify the driver as, at present, it was only displayed on the windscreen. He suggested that it also be available on the back of the passenger seat.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) no changes be made to the external livery of Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicles;
- b) Officers undertake an immediate review of the internal livery of vehicles e.g. additional signage on the rear of passenger seats and report back to Committee their findings; and
- c) a further report be presented to Committee in June 2023 on possible changes to the livery of Hackney Carriage Vehicles in the district.

15 UPDATE ON PAVEMENT LICENCES AND REVIEW OF FEES

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to advise Members of the current position with regard to Pavement Licences issued under the Business & Planning Act. Members' consideration of the current fees charged by the Council was also sought.

The report set out the background to the current pavement licence regime that had been introduced to support businesses with arrangements to trade effectively during the controls imposed as part of the response to the coronavirus pandemic, noting that it had not replaced the regime already in existence. It was reported that the Government had committed to making the provision of pavement licences, in England

and Wales, under the Business & Planning Act permanent. The new regime was set out within the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill and would become law once that had passed through parliament.

It was reported that only 3 pavement licences had been issued by the district council, noting that there were no powers that could be used to enforce the requirement to have a valid licence. In considering the cost-of-living crisis for households and businesses, it was proposed to make no change to the current fees charged as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report and that no changes be made to the licence conditions, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

In considering the report Members noted that under the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill the proposed application fee for a new licence was £500. They considered this to be too high as any increase in business by utilising such a licence would be marginal and requested that the proposed fee be challenged. It was suggested that there should be a scale of charges e.g. the larger the pavement area utilised the higher the fee.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the temporary extension to the pavement licence regime until 30 September 2023 be noted;
- b) the Government's policy proposal that the regime become permanent, subject to parliamentary approval, be noted; and
- c) the fee for a new licence application and the renewal of an existing licence remain unchanged.

16 UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Senior Licensing Officer into the activity and performance of the Licensing Team which included details of current ongoing enforcement issues.

Information contained within the report related to the number of applications for grants and renewals of licences for Hackney Carriage; Private Hire; and Ambulance Drivers together with those for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles. A note of ongoing enforcement activity was also listed with information as to what action had been taken to-date.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

Meeting closed at 6.54 pm.

Chairman