

LICENSING COMMITTEE

24 October 2022

Present:

Councillor Bob Foale (Chair)

Councillors Warwick, Asvachin, Ellis-Jones, Holland, Mitchell, K, Parkhouse, Rees, Snow and Wood

Apologies:

Councillors Newby, Oliver, Vizard and Wright

Also present:

Legal Advisor, Principal Licensing Officer and Democratic Services Officer (SLS)

5 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2022 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

6 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976

7 **Request for a variation of Hackney Carriage Fares**

The Licensing Committee received the report on the request for an increase to the Hackney Carriage Fare Tariff. Setting taxi fares was an Executive function and the report had been presented at the Executive Committee on 4 October 2022. The Executive approved the commencement of a four week public consultation and in line with best practice, the Executive report had been brought to the Licensing Committee for information.

Particular reference was made to the proposal being presented to and welcomed by representatives of the Hackney Carriage Associations at the Taxi Forum meeting on 2 August 2022. The Associations were asked to consult their members on the proposal. Following their Annual General Meeting (AGM) a response was received which indicated that 100% of the 59 respondents' were in favour of the proposed tariff.

Members noted that there had not been an increase in Hackney Carriage taxi fares since 2013, and that the proposal put forward was based on the Guildford model which had stood up to legal challenges in the courts and was based on local information to consider the cost of living in the city. Following consultation, a report would be taken to Executive on 29 November and Council on 13 December for approval. If the fare increase was approved by Council, it would put Exeter at the top of the Devon Tariff charts and 54th in the national list.

The Principal Licensing Officer invited Members to comment before the matter was due to be brought back to the Executive for determination. The Taxi Forum were also due to meet in November and would have the opportunity for further discussion. A

small number of responses had been received with comments ranging from concern over fare increases and the challenges to the cost of living, but also comments supporting a rise in the salary of Exeter's Hackney Carriage drivers. The Taxi Association were still to make their views known.

The Chair welcomed the opportunity to review the Hackney Carriage Fare tariff and gave a commitment to ensure that there would be further discussion and liaison between the trade and the Licensing team through regular meetings of the Taxi Forum. The Principal Licensing Officer stated that the Trade were supportive of the proposals and following the end of the consultation period, all of the responses would be collated and included in the report to the Executive. It was hoped that following determination by the Executive, that a new taxi tariff could be in place by the end of the year.

In response to questions by Members, the Principal Licensing Officer explained:-

- that the number of hackney carriage saloon vehicles plates would be static until the policy of ensuring 50% of the vehicles were wheelchair accessible were met.
- there were currently 85 hackney carriage plates.
- an increase in the annual salary of Hackney Carriage drivers might prove more of an incentive to join or re-join the trade. There had been an increase in the level of applications from drivers, which might help to improve taxi availability.
- a number of drivers had left the trade particularly during the Covid pandemic as demand for taxis had changed, to work as delivery drivers, but they were beginning to return with an exponential increase in applications seen across the country.
- that trade had not been affected at the John Lewis rank on Sidwell Street.
- he would contact the Chair of the Exeter St David's Hackney Carriage Association to discuss a percentage figure quoted recently.

Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 5.45 pm

Chair