

LICENSING APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Appeals and Complaints Committee of South Norfolk District Council held on 21 November 2022 at 10.30am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: Y Bendle (Chairman), J Halls, T Holden, W Kemp and T Spruce

Apologies: Councillors: D Burrill, J Easter, P Hardy, J Hornby and N Legg

Officers in Attendance: The Licensing and Enforcement Team Leader (S Harris), the Licensing and Enforcement Officer (R Setford), the Licensing Officer (I Streeter) and the Democratic Services Officer (J Hammond)

Also in Attendance: The Legal Adviser to the Committee (S Haldane)

651 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs D Burrill, J Easter, P Hardy, J Hornby and N Legg.

652 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received from members.

653 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Licensing, Appeals and Complaints Committee held on 24 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

654 TAXIMETER TARIFF (TABLE OF FARES) CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Licensing and Enforcement Team Leader presented the report, which detailed the results of a consultation exercise in respect of a proposed table of

fares which will be applicable to any licensed hackney carriages from 1 April 2023.

Members were reminded that the Council's current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy and Conditions document, which was approved by full Council and came into effect from 1 April 2022, required that from 1 April 2023 all licensed hackney carriages be fitted with an approved taximeter. The introduction of a table of fares was now proposed to ensure compliance with the previously adopted policy. Legislation allowed the Council to fix the rates of fares for time, distance and all other charges to be paid in respect of the hire of hackney carriages. The table of fares would be the maximum amount chargeable for the hire of the vehicle. Drivers/proprietors would therefore not be prevented from charging less than the fares fixed by the Council.

The Licensing and Enforcement Team Leader informed the Committee that the proposed table of fares had been prepared following a thorough benchmarking process which took into account the fares of neighbouring authorities, the rural nature of the district and the fluctuating fuel prices. To ensure that the charges remained relevant, a system of reviewing the fares was also proposed on an annual basis. The basis for a review would usually be to compare charges that had a direct impact upon the hackney carriage trade, which included:

- Purchase of motor vehicles
- Motor insurance
- Maintenance of motor vehicles
- Petrol and oil
- Vehicle excise licenses
- Radio rental
- Taximeters
- Rents
- Wages
- Council Tax
- Licence fees

One member queried whether there was scope for more frequent reviews of the fares, given the current volatility of the economic environment and the cost-of-living crisis. The Licensing and Enforcement Team Leader assured members that officers were monitoring the cost-of-living crisis and any concerns over the fares would be raised with the Committee in the first instance. She added that a full review of the fares was resource intensive and not considered appropriate. The Licensing Officer further advised that there would be a cost to the proprietor or driver each time the taximeters needed to be recalibrated.

In response to a query the Licensing and Enforcement Officer explained that South Norfolk Council currently had 96 licensed hackney carriages. She added that, since the adoption of the current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Policy, some of the hackney carriage drivers had converted to a

private hire vehicle; it was considered likely that more drivers would convert their license once the requirement for taximeters came into effect on 1 April 2023.

An 8-week consultation exercise had been carried out, which had resulted in seven responses being received. Three responses from current South Norfolk Council licence holders; one response from a Parish Council; one response from a charitable organisation; and two responses from taximeter manufacturers, which resulted in two technical amendments being incorporated into the document. The Licensing and Enforcement Team Leader outlined the additional concerns raised as part of the consultation (which were included at appendix two of the report) and advised that these concerns had been addressed however no further amendments were proposed.

In response to a question regarding how the taximeters would be inspected, the Licensing and Enforcement Officer explained that the taximeters would be checked by Council approved garages when the vehicle's biannual inspection was carried out. Licensing officers would also inspect the taximeters as part of roadside enforcement checks.

After further discussion, it was unanimously

RESOLVED

To recommend to Council that it adopts the taximeter tariffs (table of fares) for hackney carriages.

(The meeting concluded at 11.00am)

Chairman