

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

General Licensing Committee

HELD AT 3.00 PM ON MONDAY 8 JULY 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH
GIFFORD

Present:

Mr Malcolm Leonard (Chairman)

Mrs Elizabeth Gillespie, Ms Joan Bland, Mr Bernard Cooper, Mrs Pat Dawe, Mrs Ann Midwinter, Mrs Pearl Slatter, Mr Michael Welply and Mr David Turner (as substitute for Ms Anne Purse)

Apologies:

Ms Anne Purse and Mrs Margaret Turner tendered apologies.

Officers:

Mr Robert Draper, Mrs Liz Hayden and Mrs Jennifer Thompson

Also present:

Ms Joy Bussell, Insight Oxford Consultants Ltd

4 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2013 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them.

5 Addresses to the committee

Mr D Clark of Thame Taxis and Chinnor Cabs spoke to the committee in support of drivers and operators setting their own tariff for hackney carriage fares.

Mr R Hullock of Britain Taxis spoke to the committee in support of drivers and operators setting their own tariff.

Mr M Brind, an independent driver in Didcot spoke to the committee in support of drivers and operators setting their own tariff.

Mr D Pryor of Pryors spoke to the committee in support of drivers and operators setting their own tariff.

Mr J Akhtar spoke to the committee in support of the district council setting the tariff for hackney carriage fares, or for removing meters altogether if drivers and operators were allowed to set their own tariffs.

6 Hackney carriage tariff in South Oxfordshire District Council area

The committee had before them the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services setting out the results of the public consultation; the report from the consultants; and an additional paper setting out the comments from members of the trade and public. The committee considered whether to recommend Council to allow drivers and operators to set their own tariffs, or to introduce a council set tariff and undertake the statutory consultation on structuring and setting this.

Mr R Draper, Licensing Team Leader, Mrs Liz Hayden, Legal, Licensing and Community Safety Manager, and Ms J Bussell of Insight Oxford Consultants Ltd, introduced the report and answered questions from the committee.

The committee debated their recommendation to Council, taking into account the officer's report, the summary of the public consultation, the verbatim responses received, and the addresses from members of the trade.

Members of the committee noted that the evidence from the consultation process could be considered sound. This showed support for an operator-set tariff. They noted that it was not possible to accurately split the data into Vale and South areas but respondents were asked where they hired taxis. Officers explained that from 1 October 2013 council-approved compliance centres would test meters for accuracy and then seal these. It was not possible to undertake spot-checks on meters. Complaints about over-charging for hackney carriage hires would be investigated by the licensing team.

The committee discussed the option of allowing operators to set their own tariffs for a minimum of three months and notify the licensing authority of these, but concluded this gave no real benefit to the public and was overly bureaucratic and labour intensive. It considered that there were benefits in having a council-set tariff defining a maximum fare. However there were disadvantages for the trade in restricting the fares they could charge, given the wide variety of costs, standards and journeys undertaken. There was limited additional benefit to the public in having a council set tariff over an operator set tariff with a meter, as there would still be a range of tariffs and extra charges in operation. The consultation showed a clear majority in favour of allowing operators and drivers to set their own tariffs.

A motion to recommend Council to allow drivers and operators to continue to set their own tariffs was proposed, seconded, and carried when put to a vote.

RESOLVED: to recommend Council to allow drivers and operators to continue to set their own tariffs.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm

Chairman

Date