

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Licensing Committee
25 February 2013**

*Councillor Carson Albury (Chairman)
Councillor Debbie Kennard (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ann Bridges	Councillor David Donaldson
Councillor Darren Burns	*Councillor Emma Evans
Councillor Richard Burt	Councillor Mary Hamblin
Councillor Brian Coomber	Councillor Mike Mendoza

* Absent

LC/46/12-13 Declarations of Interest / Substitute Members

There were no declarations of interest.

LC/47/12-13 Confirmation of minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the Licensing Committees on the 2 July 2012 and 28 November 2012, and the Licensing Regulatory Sub-Committee that took place on 23 July 2012, 10 September 2012, 25 October 2012 and the 13 December 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

LC/48/12-13 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

There were no items.

LC/49/12-13 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions or statements by the public

**LC/50/12-13 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
Proposed Increase in the Taxi Tariff**

Before the Committee was a report by the Executive Head of Housing, Health and Community Safety, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 5. Members were requested to consider an application received from an Adur Hackney Carriage proprietor for an increase in the Hackney Carriage Tariff.

The Senior Licensing Officer introduced the report to the Committee. The Committee were told that the tariff had not been increased since 2008 and that a trade ballot carried out in 2012 had resulted in a narrow rejection of proposals to seek an increase. The Committee was informed that an individual proprietor and driver had exercised his right to seek a change in the tariff. The Committee were informed further that drivers were not obliged to use the full tariff on their meter.

Mr Flemming, the applicant laid out his case for the Committee, his main points were:

- The cost of running his business has increased. Insurance, repair and fuel costs had all risen and prices needed to reflect costs better.
- Some drivers had taken to working seven days a week to make up costs which was a health and safety issue;
- The tariff was a maximum fare only and some drivers could choose not to increase their fares if they didn't agree with the raise;

A Member asked by what percentage costs had risen for drivers. Mr Flemming proffered that insurance and repair costs had gone up by 35% and that fuel; costs had risen dramatically. Mr Flemming told Members that these costs could differ between drivers.

A Member asked how Adur tariff levels compared with other Districts and Boroughs. Mr Flemming replied that it was difficult to compare fares across districts as topographical variances were responsible for differences in levels of taxi fares.

Mr Ridley a taxi driver with an opposing view to Mr Flemming was invited to make a representation, his main points were:

- Adur taxi tariffs were artificially high, they were the 9th highest in the Country and the highest in Sussex, any increase would make them the highest in the Country whilst fuel and other costs in Adur were not significantly greater than in other parts of the Country;
- It was related that the proposals would mean a 21% increase for short journeys and a 9% increase for longer journeys;
- The increase would be 'commercial suicide' for drivers particularly in light of the on-going recession;
- If drivers were to vary the fares that they displayed on their meters it could result in customers getting in three different taxis over three different days and paying three different fares. It was related that this could have safety risks where inebriated passengers on a Friday/Saturday could become violent because of the price difference;
- It was argued that the proposal unfairly penalised elderly or vulnerable passengers who took shorter journeys.

Upon request Mr Ridley supplied a copy of 'private hire monthly' which listed taxi tariffs by local authority.

In summing up Mr Flemming stated that the figures presented in the trade magazine were initially brought in to highlight how 'low' taxi tariffs were nationally. He asked Members not to focus on 'percentages' when assessing the increase as he purported that this could be illusory in light of the small figures being talked about. He asked them to consider that the rise was only 50p. He also asked them to note that the figures supplied in the trade magazine did not include the 'extras' that taxi's in other authority's charges.

In summing up Mr Ridley stated that the increase was not 50p and gave three examples where the proposals would mean an increase charge greater than 50p over the length of the journey. Members were told that many drivers were not in favour of proposal and felt it was not appropriate in the current financial climate.

It was proposed, seconded and carried that the taxi tariff remain the same without the proposed increase.

Resolved: that the request from the Adur licensed proprietor and driver for a new Tariff scheme be refused.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.42pm, it having commenced at 7.00pm.

Chairman