

**Minutes of a Meeting of the  
Licensing Committee  
07 March 2016**

Councillor Emma Evans (Chairman)

*Councillor Ann Bridges	Councillor Lyn Phillips
Councillor Stephen Chipp	Councillor Peter Metcalfe
Councillor Brian Coomber	Councillor David Simmons
*Councillor David Lambourne	Councillor Ben Stride
*Councillor Fred Lewis	

\* Absent

**LC/15-16/11          Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**LC/15-16/12          Confirmation of Minutes**

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the Licensing Committee meetings held on 27 October 2015 and the 9 November 2015 be approved.

**LC/15-16/12          Public Question Time**

There were questions raised during Public Question time

**LC/15-16/13          Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions**

There were no items.

**LC/15-16/14          Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Proposed Increase in the Taxi Tariff**

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Communities, 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 4.

Members were requested to consider an application received from an Adur Taxi proprietor & chairman of the Adur Taxi Trade Group for an increase in the Hackney Carriage Tariff.

Prior to the start of the item the chairman explained how discussion of the issue would proceed and began by asking those in attendance to introduce themselves.

**Presentation of the report by the Licensing Officer**

The Licensing Officer introduced the report to the Committee. Members were told that two previous applications for a raise in the tariff (2011 and 2014) had been refused by the Committee. The Officer explained that the tariff had been checked and that it was possible to programme into the meters. Members were told of the process undertaken prior to the matter being brought before the Committee.

### **Members questions for the Licensing Officer**

In responding to questions the Licensing Officer explained the makeup of the trade body and set out the numbers of those taking part in a trade ballot.

### **Presentation by objectors**

Mr Ridley made his representation which is summarised as follows:

- Running costs for vehicles were not more expensive anywhere locally but fares within the Adur District were disproportionately larger;
- The proposed increase in fares would make the district's the highest in Sussex;
- Fuel prices had dropped in since 2008;
- There were flaws in the way the trade body was constituted and meetings of the trade body had been subject to alterations at short notice which meant that many drivers could not be present;
- Rules regarding the trade body as set out in the agenda for the meeting were different from those that had been sent to drivers;
- The economic climate has meant that people have a shortage of money which translates to a shortage of customers for hackney carriage drivers;
- Taxi customers do not complain about the fares because they do not know who to complain to. If customers are not happy about the fares they don't use the taxis;

### **Members' questions for the objectors**

Mr Ridley was asked why, by objecting, was he not choosing to charge his customers extra. Mr Ridley stated that he wanted to sustain his trade and hold onto his customers.

Mr Ridley was asked about various aspects of the proposed fare and his opinion as to whether the tariff should be changed in any form and he replied that there was no need and should be kept the same.

A Member asked about Mr Ridley's experience and his opinion as to how the fares had risen to the current level and Mr Ridley opined that fares had risen when the economy was in better shape.

### **Presentation by the applicant**

Mr Campfield, Chairman of the Adur licensed drivers trade group introduced his application as summarised below.

- In 2014 the Committee had rejected a proposed fare increase on the basis that they were not convinced that a majority of drivers were behind the increase;

- In response to these comments, rules for a trade body had been drawn up and two candidates for Chairman put forward with one selected. Postal votes had been issued regarding the proposed tariff and a substantial number of driver had voted in support of the proposal;
- Mr Campfield gave some figure to illustrate the monthly expense of running a taxi;
- The area was expensive to live in and the rise was necessary to cover living expenses, particularly for younger drivers with families and mortgages;
- There had been no rise in fares for seven and a half years;
- Drivers were self employed with no sick pay and no support;
- Drivers were not being greedy;
- Mr Campfield asked the Committee to consider the free market economy when making their decision;
- Mr Campfield told Members that the Private Hire trade had introduced hire fares and were now more expensive than the Hackney Carriages, traditionally this was the other way around;
- In summary Mr Campfield felt that the proposed rise was not unreasonable.

### **Questions for the applicant from Members**

A Member asked why the proposal had reduced the yardage on the first tariff and had research been carried out in this regard. Mr Campfield told members that a lot of journeys were short in nature so the change had been suggested to put up the front of the meter, which was comparable with Brighton but the type of journeys varied from authority to authority so it was hard to make comparisons.

A Member commented that less than half of drivers had responded, Mr Campfield felt that the response had been good and was comparable to the turnout at elections

A Member asked Mr Campfield if he thought that the arrival of Uber to Brighton would affect his business. Mr Campfield felt that Uber would not particularly affect the trade because Adur was too small.

### **Debate**

Members debated the application and generally agreed that there were some aspects of the application that they could agree with such as the increase in cost for waiting times and bringing forward the time for unsociable hours surcharges. However it was felt that the application could not be supported as a whole because of concerns about the reduction in tariff charges alongside a proposed increase in price.

**Resolved:** that the application for a new tariff scheme be rejected

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.53pm it having commenced at 7.00pm

### **Chairman**