

Minutes

of a meeting of the

General Licensing Committee



held on Tuesday 9 July 2013 at 6.00pm
in the Council Chamber, The Abbey House, Abingdon

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Charlotte Dickson (Chairman), Marilyn Badcock (Vice-Chairman), John Amys, Eric Batts, Anthony Hayward, Dudley Hoddinott, Bob Johnston, Bill Jones, Aidan Melville, Elizabeth Miles, Gill Morgan, Val Shaw, Alison Thomson and Catherine Webber

Ex-officio member: Councillor Richard Webber

Officers: Steve Culliford, Robert Draper, Liz Hayden, and Margaret Reed

By invitation: Joy Bussell (Insight Oxford)

Number of members of the public: 3

GL.4 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

Councillor Ron Mansfield had sent his apologies for absence and appointed Councillor Andrew Skinner as his substitute.

GL.5 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record the minutes of the committee meeting held on 15 May 2013 and agree that the chairman signs them.

GL.6 Declarations of interest

None

GL.7 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

GL.8 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the General Licensing Committee

Mr Jason Atherton made a statement in favour of removing the council-set tariff that controlled prices for taxi journeys. He preferred to run his own tariff so he could compete on the same level with proprietors from the neighbouring South Oxfordshire district. As South Oxfordshire District Council's General Licensing Committee was recommending no council-set tariff and as South Oxfordshire shared its licensing team with the Vale, he believed this council should follow suit and have no tariff. He had not responded to the consultation as he believed the officers had not asked the same questions for each council. He also believed that the responses of non-taxi users were irrelevant to the committee's discussion.

GL.9 Removal or retention of a council set hackney carriage tariff in Vale of White Horse District Council area

The committee considered the report of the head of legal and democratic services. This set out the consultation results on the retention or removal of the council-set hackney carriage tariff in the Vale of White Horse area. The officers had carried out a consultation with the taxi trade and the public following the committee's request in October 2012. The officers appointed Insight Oxford to carry out the consultation, analyse the results and report to the committee.

The committee noted that there were more taxi users in favour of retaining the tariff than removing it. Given the current economic climate, some of those in favour of retaining the tariff were opposed to increasing prices. Some saw consistency and transparency as important outcomes of retaining a tariff. A majority of taxi providers that responded supported retaining the tariff. However, Joy Bussell of Insight Oxford advised the committee to treat the taxi providers' consultation results with caution, as the responses had not provided a large sample.

The committee also noted that taxi users had expressed a preference for reducing the fares, allowing lower pricing for shorter journeys, and regular reviews of the tariff. The taxi providers also asked for an annual review of the tariff, but with increased prices and higher prices for larger vehicles.

The committee believed that retaining a tariff would continue to protect the public from escalating prices. However, restructuring the tariff would allow more flexibility for taxi proprietors to charge different rates for different sized vehicles and to charge different rates at different times of the day and at weekends and bank holidays. The committee supported this as it felt this would increase the availability of taxis outside normal working hours.

RESOLVED: to recommend Council to retain a council-set hackney carriage tariff and undertake a statutory consultation with the trade to restructure and update the tariff.

Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm