
Meeting: Licensing Committee
Date: 12 September 2012
Subject: Application for an increase in hackney carriage fares.
Report of: Gary Alderson – Director of Sustainable Communities
Summary: To consider whether to approve an application for an increase in hackney carriage fares and to bring them into effect from 1 October 2012.

Contact Officer: Margaret James, Licensing Enforcement Officer
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Supporting and Caring for an ageing population – provision of safe public transport supports independent living.

Financial:

Fees are payable for this type of licence, the fees being charged represent the cost of the Council of producing this type of licence.

Legal:

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
Town Police Clauses Act 1847.

Risk Management:

Ensuring that Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles operating in Central Bedfordshire are safe and properly regulated.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

There are no staffing implications.

Equalities/Human Rights:

The Council has a legal duty to proactively promote race, gender and disability equality and to tackle discrimination experienced by other vulnerable groups. In order to ensure the personal safety of all vulnerable groups wishing to use licensed vehicles, conditions attached to licences ensure that this duty is met.

Community Safety:

Contributes to a safer public transport system and a safer night time economy. The Council has a statutory duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to do all that it reasonably can to reduce crime and disorder in its area. The provision of sufficient numbers of taxis is a key component of reducing crime and disorder problems linked to the night time economy and licensed premises. In addition, it is essential to ensure that the public, and particularly more vulnerable members of the community, are not left without safe transport options which may lead them to take decisions which put their safety at risk.

Sustainability:

By regulating this service area we can ensure that those businesses that are compliant can be supported and resources can be focused at those businesses that will not comply.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. that the Committee consider approving an application for an increase in hackney carriage fares to take effect from 1 October 2012.**

Background

1. It is the responsibility of Local Authorities to set the maximum fares for hackney carriages (taxis). The last request for an increase in fares was discussed on 3 December 2008 when Members of the Licensing Committee resolved to increase hackney carriage fares to their current level with effect from 2 January 2009.
2. In May 2012, a request for an increase in hackney carriage fares was received from Mr Bryan Burgin, a Leighton Buzzard based proprietor. A list of the names and badge numbers of eighty two licensed proprietors or drivers who agreed with the request accompanied are available on request. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix A for Members information.
3. Upon receipt of the request, and following clarification regarding the proposed tariff with Mr Burgin, a letter, together with a copy of the Notice, was sent to all hackney carriage proprietors requesting their comments on the matter. A copy of the letter sent to all proprietors dated 1 July 2012 is attached at Appendix B for Members information.

4. A public Notice was also published in the Bedfordshire on Sunday, Bedford Midweek and the Biggleswade Advertiser.
5. No comments were received from the trade on the matter but one objection to the proposal was received from a member of the public. A copy of the letter of objection is attached at Appendix C for Members information.
6. On 18 July 2012, a second letter was sent to all hackney carriage proprietors informing them that an objection to the proposal had been received. The proprietors were informed that the matter would be considered by the Licensing Committee and their comments were invited. A copy of the letter dated 18 July is attached at Appendix D for Members information.

Other matters to take into consideration.

7. Hackney carriage fares are the maximum that may be charged. To clarify matters, and for Members information, the following rules apply:-
 - The meter must be used for every journey; however, a driver may accept a lesser fare than that shown on the meter.
 - If a fare is agreed in advance of a hiring, (including in advance through a private hire operator) the meter must still be used and the cost of the agreed fare must not be more than that shown on the meter.
 - The only time a meter does not have to be used is if a journey ends outside of Central Bedfordshire. In this case the customer should be advised at the start of the journey that it will be for an agreed fare as opposed to a metered fare.
8. Private Hire Operators set their own fares and they are not controlled by the local authority.
9. To assist Members, a chart is attached at Appendix E comparing rate 1 fares for neighbouring local authorities.
10. One e-mail letter of support for the proposal has been received from the trade and is attached at Appendix F for Members information.
11. Where a local authority modifies a table of fares in light of objections, the revised fare table must come into effect within two months of the original date shown on the Notice. If Members are minded to revise the hackney carriage fare table, it will be necessary for the fares to come into effect from 1 October 2012.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Letter from Mr Burgin requesting an increase in fares.

Appendix B – Letter to proprietors dated 1 July 2012

Appendix C – Copy letter of objection from a member of the public

Appendix D – Letter to proprietors dated 18 July 2012.

Appendix E – Fare chart for neighbouring authorities.

Appendix F – Letter of support from a member of the trade.

Background Papers:

None

Location of papers:

Watling House, Dunstable