

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Regulatory Committee on Wednesday, 11 January 2023 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Abbott (Vice-Chair), Fry, Loftus, A. McInerney, G. Stockton and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Wallace and Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Hesketh and L. Wilson-Lagan

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE

		<i>Action</i>
REG5	MINUTES	
	<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2022 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.</p>	
REG6	TAXI LICENSING MATTER	
	<p>The Committee considered a report which outlined a request from the Taxi Trade to increase the current Hackney Carriage Table of Fares due to the impact of the costs of living crisis. The Trade had been consulted on 1) whether there should be a fare increase and 2) the method of the increase. The Committee were referred to the responses and counterproposals received which were appended to the Committee report.</p> <p>Most of the trade were in favour of an increase and the proposal set out at page 7 of the report. The Committee were advised of slight typographical errors set out in the proposed new table of fares on page 7 and were handed a new table setting out the correct proposal.</p> <p>The proposal was for a 30p increase to the start rate as well as a 10% reduction on the yardage figures (except for the first 440 yards used to calculate the start rate) on all</p>	

tariffs. The yardage figure is reduced on Tariff 1 from 220 to 200 yards, on Tariff 2 from 165 to 150 yards and on Tariff 3 from 132 to 120 yards. The yardage unit price of 0.20p was to be maintained. It was also proposed that the waiting time be increased by £3.00 per hour. The table below sets out the proposed new rates.

T1	£3.30 for the first 440 yards (402 metres) then £0.20 for each 200 yards (182.9 metres) or part thereof
T2	£4.10 for the first 440 yards (402 metres) then £0.20 for each 150 yards (137.2 metres) or part thereof
T3	£4.90 for the first 440 yards (402 metres) then £0.20 for each 120 yards (109.7) or part thereof
<p>Waiting Time</p> <p>The hirer will be charged £0.20 for the following periods or uncompleted part thereof</p> <p>Tariff 1 – 48 seconds Tariff 2 – 34 seconds Tariff 3 – 27 seconds</p>	

The Committee were advised that the proposal represented a 10% monetary increase in fares.

The Committee also took into account information from two drivers who were for and against the proposal. This information was handed to the Committee on the night and read out by Officers.

In analysing the proposal, the Committee considered the increase in the cost of living as shown by the Consumer Prices Index which rose by 11.1% in the 12 months up to October 2022 and in overheads for drivers and proprietors especially the cost of fuel, noting that most of the Hackney Carriages in Halton were diesel. It also noted that the UK national minimum wage, DWP benefits and the basic and new state pensions were set to rise from April 2023 by around 10%.

The Committee also noted that the proposed table of fares was consistent with that charged by neighbouring authorities in the City Region and Cllr Stockton stated that the proposed new fares were still much lower than those charged by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The Committee also considered the proposed increase in light of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty as statistics showed that the elderly and people with disabilities are more reliant on public transport, particularly the bus and taxis, than younger adults and non-disabled

adults. It noted that age and disabilities groups would be consulted. However, given that a 10% fare increase was proposed and the basic and state pension together with Disability Living Allowance was set to rise by 10% by April 2023, it accepted that any negative impact would be short lived and there would be a negligible impact from April 2023.

Whilst noting the objections from some members of the trade, the Committee also noted that the Table of Fares was the maximum amount that drivers/ proprietors were allowed to charged and that a lower fare could be agreed with consumers if drivers so wished. It was considered that this dealt with the concerns raised by those objecting to the proposal.

The Committee accepted the Officer's conclusions that the proposal was in line with inflation and that it was a reasonable and proportionate increase which struck the right balance between the needs of the fare-paying public, the requirements for affordable transport and also the needs of the taxi drivers to make a fair living.

It therefore recommended that the proposed new table of fare be accepted by the Executive Board and that Officers commence the public notification and consultation procedure as required by the statutory procedure.

During the debate, Cllr Loftus explained that there were no direct routes for taxis to travel around the north end of Runcorn. For example, going from Asda to Palace Fields requires them to go through numerous housing estates. This is more time consuming and expensive for members of the public. She proposed the busways be opened to taxis as a solution and it was agreed that the matter be referred to Transportation for further comment and for her request to be noted in these minutes.

RESOLVED: The Committee requested that the Executive Board:-

1. agree the proposed fare increase; and
2. authorise officers to commence the public notification and consultation as required by the statutory procedure.

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REG7 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

REG8 CREAMFIELDS EVENT 2022

The Committee considered a report summarising the Creamfields Event 2022 from the responsible authorities.

The Committee accepted the report. However, requested that representatives from the Police attend the next Committee meeting to provide some further information.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted.

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Meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.