

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LICENSING COMMITTEE

13 JULY 2011

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES

TAXI LICENSING

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976 SECTION 65 APPLICATIONS TO AMEND THE TABLE OF TAXI FARES

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 At the meeting held on 13 April 2011, the Committee received an application to increase Taxi Fares in the County Borough and, having been minded to approve the application, authorised the statutory public consultation. The Committee is requested to consider the objections received and details of a revision to the original application which has been received from the applicants.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The duties of the Council under the Act are regulatory in nature. Members are advised that, although not mandatory, this Council has set a maximum table of fares for a significant number of years. The adoption of an authorised table of fares coupled with usage of taxi meters provides a mechanism to regulate charging and to protect the consumer.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Public Notice detailing the proposed increases was published in the Glamorgan Gazette. A letter notifying the trade of the proposals was sent to all holders of vehicle licences and to local companies. The Public Notice was also published on the Council's website.
- 3.2 At their meeting on 13 April 2011, the Committee approved a number of changes to the Taxi Tariffs. An objection was submitted by Mr Borland a licensed taxi driver and vehicle owner. His objections are summarised alongside the proposed increases.
 - 3.2.1 Mr Borland's had no objection to the proposed increase to the general fare Tariffs 1-4 as specified in the application. His main objection was to the new tariffs 5 and 6 relating to the Christmas and New Year period and stated that it represented a significant rise in the fares being charged. He quotes an increase of 49.5% for users of saloon cars and 51.5% for users of minibuses. He states that he does not see how the taxi industry can sustain such a price rise. He also believes that the increase would lead to an increase in the confrontational situations between passengers and drivers taking into account that these are also times when a large amount of alcohol is consumed by a large number of people. He wishes the current tariff structure for Christmas and New Year to remain in place.
 - 3.2.2 He also objected to the proposed waiting time of £25 per hour or part thereof for Tariffs 5 and 6. He feels that the current rate of £15 per hour is reasonable.

- 3.2.3 In respect of the amendment to the charge for payment by credit card/debit card from £1 per transaction to up to 10% per transaction Mr Borland also objects to this proposal on the basis that the choice of having the facility to take credit cards is entirely up to the driver and should have been considered in the decision to offer the facility and that the current charge is a fair contribution towards the operating costs.
- 3.2.4 In summary, the objector feels that some of the proposals will do more damage to the industry. He agrees that the taxi trade has had to absorb massive increases in the cost of fuel and insurance but feels that the trade should maintain an empathy with customers and be realistic in its approach by adopting a reasonable and acceptable level of increase to the tariffs without putting the service out of reach of the more vulnerable members of the community.
- 3.2.5 A further e mail was received from a local company after the closing date for objections. The objection advocated postponing any fare increases for a few months but did not include any details or reasons for doing so.
- 3.3. The following amendments to the wording of the Table of Fares were proposed by officers and no objections were received:
- 3.3.1 Extra Charges; Waiting Time; add the words "or part thereof" to any description of the charge.
- 3.3.2 Amend the wording on the Tariffs to: Passengers and drivers should note that the meter must be switched on at the start of each journey and operate for the entire journey. There are no objections to this proposal.
- 3.4 The applicants have been advised of the objection and have subsequently amended their application to comprise only the request to increase Tariffs 1-4 as specified in the original report.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The result of the consultation process is that there are no objections to the proposed increases to Tariffs 1-4 as set out in Appendix A to this report. The applicants have withdrawn the parts of the applications which gave rise to objections. As a result, if the Committee is minded to proceed with the amended application it is required to set a date on which the new Table of Fares shall come into force. This must be within two months of the date specified in the Public Notice which was 16 June 2011. To ensure that there is sufficient time for meters to be changed and for tariff sheets to be printed it is suggested that the effective date of the increase is 15 August 2011.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The proposal has been screened for the potential impact on protected groups within the community and human rights. We do not consider on the basis of the above that a detailed Equality Impact Assessment is required for this proposal at this stage, and no issues were identified during the consultation process.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Any costs associated with these amendments will be met from within existing budgets.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Members are requested to consider the amended application, and, if minded to approve an increase to Tariffs 1-4 to approve the coming into effect of the changes to take effect on 15 August 2011.

8.2 Members are requested to approve the following amendments to the wording of the Table of Fares:

8.2.1 Extra Charges; Waiting Time; add the words "or part thereof" to any description of the charge.

8.2.2 Amend the wording on the Tariffs to: Passengers and drivers should note that the meter must be switched on at the start of each journey and operate for the entire journey.

P A Jolley

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Date 7 July 2011

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Background documents:

<http://www.theaa.com/onlinenews/allaboutcars/fuel/2011/february2011.pdf>

Automobile Association fuel price comparisons at www.theaa.com:

League table information sourced from Private Hire Monthly publication

Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance available at www.dft.gov.uk

Letter of Objection

E mail Objection