

# **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE**

Monday 20th June 2005, at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors A. J. Dent (Chairman), D. Hancox (Vice-Chairman), Miss D. H. Campbell, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. K. M. Gall, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, J. H. Gardener, W. R. Newnes, N. Psirides and C. R. Scurrall (substituting for E. C. Tibby).

Also in attendance was Mr. K. Nind, Secretary to the Bromsgrove Taxi Operators, Owners and Drivers Association, together with nine licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers.

12/05

### **ITEMS PUT FORWARD BY THE BROMSGROVE TAXI OPERATORS, OWNERS AND DRIVERS ASSOCIATION RELATING TO NON-CONFIDENTIAL AND NON-EXEMPT ITEMS**

The following items were submitted.

Arising therefrom:

#### (1) **HACKNEY CARRIAGE METER TESTS**

Following the ensuing discussion in respect of the how frequent Hackney Carriage meters should be tested, it was

**RESOLVED:** that the request put forward by the Association to reduce the frequency of meter testing to once a year for all vehicles, irrespective of age, be approved.

#### (2) **SURCHARGES FOR MID-TERM TESTS**

The Association expressed their dissatisfaction at the lack of communication between the Council and the Taxi trade with regard to the introduction of the surcharges to cover the cost incurred by the Council for all mid-term tests. It was felt that the surcharges should have been advertised at the same time as the notification of the increase to the licence fees.

The Association questioned whether or not the Council had broken a contract with those applicants who had applied for either a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle Licence prior to the 1st April, which was when the surcharges for the mid-term tests were introduced, as the applicant was unaware at the time of making the application that they could incur additional costs depending upon the age of their vehicle.

The Head of Administrative Services agreed to seek advice on the legal position of those Drivers who had applied for a Vehicle Licence prior to 1st April.

#### (3) **INCREASE THE LICENCE FEES FOR ALL VEHICLES**

The Association put forward a request that the current surcharges which were applicable to those vehicles which were subject to additional mid term tests be withdrawn, and that the licence fees for

all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles be increased by an additional £20.00.

The Head of Administrative Services explained that the cost to the Council for mid term tests was in the region of £4000. The suggested increase of £20.00 would not generate enough income to cover the cost of the additional tests. The increase in licence fees would need to be in the region of £38 per vehicle. The introduction of a flat-rate increase applied to all vehicles would have the effect that the owners of newer vehicles would be contributing towards the additional costs to the Council of having to test the older vehicles more frequently.

(4) **CONSULTATION ON LICENCE FEES AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES**

The Association requested that they be included in any further consultations in respect of licence fees and Hackney Carriage Fares. It was further suggested that the Council undertakes a review of its policy with regard to fixed fares.

The Head of Administrative Services agreed to submit a Report to the Council's Executive Cabinet on the Council's policy with regard to introducing maximum fares relating to Hackney Carriages, thus allowing for discounted fares being offered to those persons on low incomes.

(5) **INTRODUCE AN UPPER AGE LIMIT ON VEHICLES AND/OR INTRODUCTION OF TYPE/COLOUR REQUIREMENTS**

The Association sought confirmation that the Council was not considering the introduction of an upper age limit on licensed vehicles, or a requirement that vehicles should be of a particular type and/or colour.

It was reported that the Council had no intention at present to introduce such a scheme.

(6) **TESTING CENTRES**

The Association expressed their concern at the poor levels of customer care and lack of attention or inconsistency in the testing methods of the vehicles. Furthermore, they would like to see more flexibility in the testing time slots currently offered by the Depot, particularly for those Drivers who carry out school contract work.

Members were further informed that once a vehicle passed its test it was issued with a 'certificate of compliance'. Although this constituted a valid MOT certificate it was not usually acceptable should a driver wish to sell his vehicle to a private buyer.

It was agreed that the Head of Administrative Services investigate the feasibility of contracting the work out to an alternative MOT testing garage(s), thus allowing more flexibility for the Drivers. The report be submitted to a future meeting of the Licensing Committee.

(7) **INCREASE IN EXPENDITURE**

This item had already been dealt with prior to the Meeting.

(8) **'TWO DOOR RULE'**

The Association sought an explanation as to why the Council insists that each licensed vehicle has two uninterrupted access/exit doors.

Furthermore, it was reported that there is no consistency with regard to this condition across the County.

The Chairman explained that the 'two door rule' is for safety reasons, to ensure that passengers can escape for the rear seats of a larger vehicle by two different routes in the event of an accident.

It was agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Licensing Committee in respect of the Council's Policy relating to the 'two door rule' and the seating configuration of vehicles licensed to carry more than four passengers.

(9) **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) **First Aid Kits**

The Association questioned why there was a need for all vehicles to carry a first aid kit within their vehicle, particularly in view of the fact that none of the drivers were medically trained to offer first aid assistance.

It was agreed that the contents of the first aid kit would be looked at and would be subject to a report to a future meeting of the Licensing Committee.

(b) **Thanks**

Mr Nind, on behalf of the Association thanked the Licensing Committee for their continued support to the taxi trade and stated that it had been a successful meeting.

The Meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.

Chairman