

Licensing and Appeals Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 17 July 2023

Present: Councillor Grimshaw – in the Chair

Councillors: Connolly, Evans, Hewitson, Hughes, Flanagan

Apologies: Councillors Andrews, Reid and Riasat

LAP/23/01 Interests

Councillor Flanagan declared a pecuniary interest in Item 6 – Taxi and Private Hire Policy Revision.

LAP/23/02 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 were submitted for approval.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2022 as a correct record.

LAP/23/03 Hackney Carriage Fare Review 2023

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing, that set out the relevant information the Committee would need to consider to enable it to make recommendations to the Executive in relation to the Hackney Carriage Fare tariff. The report also set out proposals in relation to the use of card payments in Hackney Carriage Vehicles.

The Committee was asked to consider, in relation to the Hackney Carriage Fare Tariff, recommending to the Executive that they:

- 1) Increase the unit cost per mile on all tariffs by 8%
- 2) Increase the waiting time fare by 23%
- 3) Increase the Day flag tariff to £3.40
- 4) Increase the Night flag tariff to £3.80

The Committee was also asked to determine making the acceptance of card payments mandatory in all Hackney Carriage vehicles, effective from 1 September 2023.

The Chair invited the Committee to comment/ask questions regarding the report, but no questions were asked.

The Chair then invited members of the trade and their representatives to speak for three minutes each.

A member of Unite the Union addressed the Committee, noting theirs, and their members, support for the officer recommendations. They hoped that the Committee would support all recommendations in full.

A member of GMB addressed the Committee, echoing similar sentiments. They noted that there had only been a £1 change in flag tariffs since 2007. GMB agreed with all officer recommendations.

A member of the trade who represents drivers at the Airport, stating that they echoed previous comments. They did note concerns over increasing the flag tariff again, after only being increased in October 2022. They felt that the report had not been discussed with trade representatives and expressed that they wanted to have had input. They noted that a proposed increase in the charge for extras was not in the report after they thought they had been told it would be.

The Licensing Unit Manager noted that this report was an interim step, pending a fuller review in the near future. They had held general discussions with trade representatives regarding this report but there was not time to discuss a draft report in full. The Licensing Unit Manager considered that charges for extras would form part of the fuller review.

A member of the Manchester Hackney Association addressed the Committee, noting that increases in flag charges would mitigate the charges to drivers for card payments. They agreed with the recommendation to make card payments mandatory. The representative noted that 10 years was a long time with no review of waiting time charges and backed the increase to both day and night charges.

Decision

In relation to the Hackney Carriage Fare Tariff, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Executive:

- 1) Increase the unit cost per mile on all tariffs by 8%
- 2) Increase the waiting time fare by 23%
- 3) Increase the Day flag tariff to £3.40
- 4) Increase the Night flag tariff to £3.80

The Committee also agreed to make the acceptance of card payments mandatory in all Hackney Carriage Vehicles and for the policy to take effect on 1 September 2023.

LAP/23/04 Taxi and Private Hire Policy Revision

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing, setting out some of the challenges that faced licensing authorities due to the negative impacts of extensive out of area working within the private hire industry, including the decline in taxi and private hire licence numbers in Manchester and the approach made by trade representatives for amendments to key policy areas. The report also considered the potential impacts of the proposed policy revisions, with the Licensing Unit Manager noting that there would be no adverse effect to public safety.

The Committee was asked to note the report and approve the following policy revisions:

- 1) Remove the requirement for Operator stickers on private hire vehicles
- 2) Remove the requirement for bonnet stickers on private hire vehicles
- 3) Introduce a requirement for Council issued sticker to be displayed on the rear door of a private hire vehicle
- 4) Remove the routes section (Paper 2) of the private hire driver test, and the test fee adjusted accordingly.
- 5) Remove the requirement for a coming on to fleet age limit within both the Hackney and Private Hire vehicle policies
- 6) Extend the current emissions compliant date for the existing hackney and private hire vehicle fleets to 1 April 2026

The Committee was also asked to instruct officers to consult on the further policy revisions as outlined at 4.2 of the report.

The Chair invited the Committee to comment/ask questions regarding the report.

A member noted that at 2.2 of the report, there was no mention of cost as a reason for leaving Manchester. The Licensing Unit Manager stated that through their extensive engagement with the trade that cost, whilst a factor, was not a major factor. It was noted that Manchester's sticker policy and routes test were bigger factors than cost.

Another member questioned whether, even with it not being classed as a factor, prices could be looked at. They noted that Manchester's costs were higher than Sefton and Wolverhampton, who they felt were the main issues with out of area working in Manchester. The Licensing Unit Manager noted that a major challenge was that there was no consistent, national model to consider fees. Manchester operated a full cost recovery model which meant that Manchester did not seek to make a profit but to recover all costs. Some authority's do not operate that model. Others with high number of Licenses can also reduce costs due to that. It was noted that in Manchester, fees had not increased for at least five years so had technically reduced in real terms. Another reason for licence holders not choosing Manchester was that they felt there was more chance of being caught doing something they should not be in Manchester. This was due to the proactiveness of the Licensing Unit in Manchester.

The Chair noted that this was something that could be investigated in the next review but noted that members needed to consider the work of the Licensing Unit and their proactiveness in ensuring safety of the public.

The Chair then invited members of the trade and their representatives to address the Committee for three minutes each.

A member of the National Private Hire and Taxi Association addressed the Committee, stating that they felt price was a factor. They were largely in support of most of the report, noting that the removal of certain stickers had been a longstanding issue, particularly bonnet stickers. They raised an alternative suggestion that licence holders had a sign in their windscreen to show which operator

they were working for at any time. The representative noted that the report asked the Committee to instruct consultation on further policy revisions at 4.2. They requested that the Committee consider them during the meeting.

The Licensing Unit Manager responded that they intended to bring a review of the plate requirements and felt that the windscreen sign was a helpful suggestion. The Licensing Unit Manager still asked Committee to await a further report before considering items at 4.2.

A second member of the National Private Hire and Taxi Association addressed the Committee, noting their support for the removal of bonnet and window stickers.

The Chair clarified that the report did not recommend the removal of all stickers, and if the current sticker requirements restricted a licence holders' ability to work for multiple operators. The Licensing Unit Manager confirmed that to be correct.

A representative of GMB felt that this was a good report that had included engagement with the trade. They accepted the need for a Manchester City Council logo on the car.

A member of the trade representing drivers at the Airport noted that stickers provide public safety by allowing customers to know the car they are getting into. They felt that Manchester had lost 1,000's of Licensed drivers and that there was at least 4,000 Wolverhampton Licensed vehicles working in Greater Manchester.

The Chair clarified that whilst Manchester had lost some Licensed drivers, the figure was not in the 1,000's.

Decision

The Committee approved the following policy revisions:

- 1) Remove the requirement for Operator stickers on private hire vehicles
- 2) Remove the requirement for bonnet stickers on private hire vehicles
- 3) Introduce a requirement for Council issued sticker to be displayed on the rear door of a private hire vehicle
- 4) Remove the routes section (Paper 2) of the private hire driver test, and the test fee adjusted accordingly.
- 5) Remove the requirement for a coming on to fleet age limit within both the Hackney and Private Hire vehicle policies
- 6) Extend the current emissions compliant date for the existing hackney and private hire vehicle fleets to 1 April 2026

The Committee also instructed officers to consult on the further policy revisions as outlined at 4.2 of the report.

(Councillor Flanagan had withdrawn from the meeting, taking no part in the discussion or decision-making on this item due to a Pecuniary interest).