
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE 5/12/22

Present: Chair **Cllr. Annwen Hughes**
Vice-chair **Cllr. Elfed Williams**

Councillors: Anwen Davies, Alan Jones Evans, Eryl Jones-Williams, Gareth Tudor Jones, Linda Ann Jones, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Huw Rowlands, Angela Russell and Gareth Williams

Officers: Gwenan Mai Roberts (Licensing Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democratic Services Officer)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors John Brynmor Hughes and Rheinallt Puw.

2. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. **URGENT ITEMS**

None to note

4. **MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of a meeting of this committee, that took place on 24 October 2022, as a true record

5. **GENERAL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Accepted, for information, the minutes of the General Licensing Sub-committees held on 4 October 2022

6. **PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE MAXIMUM HACKNEY CARRIAGE TAXI FARES - FOR DECISION**

- a) Submitted - the report of the Licensing Manager, recommending raising maximum hackney carriage fees in the County. Members were reminded, in accordance with The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 that places regulation duties on the Licensing Authority in relation to operating a maximum fare the public can be charged when travelling in hackney vehicles within the County, it is required that any request to change the maximum fare charged is submitted by the industry. It was confirmed that 5 recent requests had been received from the taxi company owners to review

the fares and that these fares were for hackney vehicles only and not private vehicles. In a meeting on 24 October, recommendations were presented from the Licensing Authority to increase some fares. The Committee decided to approve the recommendations as well as conducting a public consultation for 14 days. It was reported that correspondence had been submitted to the taxi industry before the consultation officially started, providing the opportunity for the industry to consider the proposals. Five objections were received with observations from representatives from the industry - no observations were received from the public. It was explained, as objections had been received to the proposal, that there was a need to re-submit recommendations so the Committee could give careful consideration to the matter before a final decision was made.

Reference was made to those factors that had affected taxi businesses recently (lockdown period during covid 19, a significant increase in fuel costs together with a significant increase in inflation) noting that these had been factors that affected everyone. The importance of evaluating the impact of the current situation was noted, ensuring fairness for the industry and taxi users. It was added that some community plans, with the support of grants, by collaborating with social hubs offer free transportation services to vulnerable users as taxi prices were too expensive. This is seen in Penygroes and Bethesda areas

Despite accepting the industry's observations, the Licensing Unit recommended to continue with the original observations but accepted the observation to remove the proposal of creating an additional tariff for journeys in a minibus where there were between 5 and 8 passengers. It was considered that this proposal, in accordance with the industry's unanimous observations, was open to misuse and there was no worth to it.

- b) During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were made by Members:
- That the report was clear and balanced
 - That there was a need to protect the industry but on the other hand consider the effect on the users
 - Welcome the consultation and the willingness of the Committee to discuss the observations
 - Difficult to get this service in Dwyfor - bus service reducing and costs of taxis increasing
- c) In response to a question regarding that the observations received reflected urban and rural matters, it was noted that a mixture of observations was received. In response to a supplementary question regarding anonymous responses, it was noted that the names and personal e-mail addresses of the respondents had been removed as a way of protecting their privacy.

In response to a comment that some companies avoided short journeys, it was confirmed that the journey costs started from the time the user was collected and therefore it was accepted that some companies avoid journeys to collect customers as the journey was long and the transportation costs were insufficient to pay the costs of the journey. It was reiterated that licensing conditions noted that users must be collected if it had been agreed over the phone.

In response to a question regarding transport for vulnerable people (making

reference to the community services and hospital appointments), it was noted that the maximum fees were not relevant to these journeys - such journeys arranged beforehand through agreement.

In a response to a question on the size of the industry in Gwynedd, it was noted that there were around 500 taxi drivers in the County with around 400 vehicles with a variety from one driver running one car, small companies with 3-5 drivers and three 'big' companies. (two in Bangor and one in Penygroes). In response to an observation that a driver received less than the minimum wage, it was noted that this depended on short journeys only. It was reiterated that many completed a combination of journeys that made more money and that some of the companies had agreements with the Education Department, Hospitals and Social Services that received costs that had been agreed with the company beforehand. It was highlighted that these costs had increased recently as a result in the increase in the costs of living.

In response to a question regarding the number of cars for wheelchairs, it was noted, in accordance with the current policy, that there was a need for 1 in every 7 cars in a company to be suitable for a wheelchair. Although it was difficult to enforce more, it was highlighted that many provided this specific service with agreements with the social and education services had large, suitable vehicles. It was added that this policy would be reviewed in 2023.

In a response to a proposal on providing electric vehicles and sites to charge electric vehicles for the industry, it was noted that Gwynedd had not taken advantage on trialling a pilot scheme in Gwynedd as no charging system existed to be able to provide a service and force the industry to use it. It was added that the provision needed improving first and consider the barriers that needed to be overcome before promoting a wide provision of electric vehicles.

It was proposed and seconded to approve the proposal by removing setting a different tariff for journeys in a minibus where there are between 5 and 8 passengers.

RESOLVED:

Approve the proposal to increase the maximum fare in accordance with the recommendations, subject to removing the recommendation for the additional tariff for journeys in a minibus where there are between 5 and 8 passengers.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.05 am

CHAIRMAN