

REPORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

(Meeting held on 2 September 1999)

1. HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFFS (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO. 25)

Requests have been received from the taxi trade to set a special tariff for Millennium Eve and to introduce a general tariff increase effective immediately. All taxi owners were consulted on the proposals and the matter was discussed with members of the Licensing Panel at a recent liaison meeting.

Millennium Eve will be a special occasion with many businesses offering their staff enhanced payments. The Committee have therefore agreed to the introduction of a special Millennium surcharge of £8 to be applied to all journeys undertaken by Hackney Carriages in the district between the hours of 6.00 p.m. on 31 December 1999 and 7.00 a.m. on 1 January 2000.

The last general tariff increase was in October 1997 and, since that time, Government statistics have revealed that in general the overall cost of motoring has increased by an average of 7.8%. Fuel costs have risen by 18% and tax and insurance by 16%.

Two Hackney Carriage owners put forward separate proposals requesting the Council to increase the maximum fare in the District. All owners were surveyed and of those who responded 76% felt that a tariff increase was necessary.

Having considered the various proposals the Committee have agreed to a maximum 13% increase in general Hackney Carriage tariffs in the District to be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

Both the Millennium Tariff and the general tariff increase will be advertised and should there be any objections to the proposals these will be considered by the Licensing Panel who have been given delegated authority to agree any necessary changes.

2. ADVERTISING CARRIED ON LICENSED VEHICLES (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO. 26)

The Council's current policy allows self advertising on the driver and front passenger door of saloon, hatchback and estate cars licensed by the Council. Additionally, minibuses may also display self advertising on the front and rear of the vehicle. These are all subject to the design, style and content being approved by the Licensing Officer. Internally advertising is not allowed.

Requests have been received from the taxi trade to change the current policy to enable the advertising of own businesses and other businesses both inside and outside of vehicles and for the policy as it is applied to minibuses to be applied to all Private Hire Vehicles.

The Committee were concerned to ensure that the difference in appearance between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles was maintained to ensure there was no confusion for customers.

After consideration the Committee have agreed that:-

- (i) hackney carriages may display on the two front doors of saloons, hatchbacks and estate cars either self or third party advertising but not a combination of both;
- (ii) hackney carriage mini-buses may display on the two front doors and on the front and rear of the vehicle self or third party advertising but not a combination of both;
- (iii) all types of hackney carriage vehicles may display self or third party advertising on the interior of the vehicle, providing it is provided in such a manner that there is no risk to passenger safety;
- (iv) private hire saloons, hatchbacks and estate cars may display self advertising on the two front doors and, additionally, be allowed to display the name and telephone number of the company on the rear of the vehicle. This to be provided by one of three ways:
 - (1) signwriting the vehicle or,
 - (2) fitment of a plate to the rear of the vehicle containing the details or,
 - (3) by way of a 2" deep rear window strip. Fitting such a window strip must not in any way compromise the rear view of the driver or passenger safety.
- (v) private hire mini-buses may display on the two front doors and on the front and rear of the vehicle self advertising only; and
- (vi) any change to the style of advertising must be by written application and require the prior approval of type, content, style and position on the vehicle by the Licensing Officer.

3. SUNDAY OBSERVANCE ACT 1780 (REPORT C) (MINUTE NO. 27)

The Home Office have recently issued a consultation paper setting out the Government's proposals to amend the Sunday Observance Act 1780 to allow charging for admission to public dances which take place on Sundays and to amend the Licensing Act 1964 to allow alcohol to be sold at public dances after 10.30 p.m. on Sundays in England and Wales.

The Committee have supported the proposals to amend the relevant legislation. In doing so the Committee have noted that the proposed changes give the power to exclude Sundays from a special hours certificate under the Licensing Act 1964, on the grounds of disturbance caused outside the premises as a result of their use. In addition, there are existing powers to restrict the hours of opening on a Sunday for public entertainment purposes.

4. REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES (REPORT D) (MINUTE NO. 28)

The Council currently maintains 34 public conveniences throughout the District at an annual cost of £393,000. Between December 1998 and March 1999 a comprehensive survey of all the public conveniences was carried out by a team of members and officers. The review was triggered by concerns about the poor structural conditions of some of the older toilet blocks, crime and disorder issues related to the design and location of some buildings and poor natural lighting in many toilets. In addition, changing lifestyles over the last 30 years have raised questions about whether specific public conveniences in certain areas are now appropriate.

All of the conveniences have been grouped into four main categories to prioritise their requirements. All the public conveniences in category 1 have reached the end of their useful life and need to be replaced. Those in categories 2 and 3 need to be refurbished in a way that brings as much natural light as possible into them probably best achieved by the installation of roof windows and light wells. Those in category 4 are of a modern style.

The Committee, in particular, considered facilities at Calshot where there are two toilet blocks both of which are generally unattractive, in poor condition and need replacing. Members were of the view that it might be more appropriate to provide a new single block in a location offering improved facilities. It was noted that any proposal would need to be looked at closely and the Beach Hut Owners Association consulted as appropriate.

Members were also particularly concerned about the toilet facilities in The Furlong and the Market Place at Ringwood, and agreed that the Town Council would be consulted before any further proposals were considered for these facilities.

Subject to the Council's overall financial position, the Committee have agreed a proposed work programme for demolition and rebuilding, where appropriate, of category 1 toilet blocks and comprehensive block by block refurbishment of category 2 and 3 toilet blocks. The Committee have also agreed, in the first instance, that further investigations should be made into the usage and suggested alternative locations of toilets at Barton Court Avenue and Marine Drive West, Barton on Sea; Blackfield; Calshot; Fordingbridge Car Park; New Street, Lymington and Lymington Quay; The Furlong and Market Place, Ringwood; Salisbury Road, Eling Recreation Ground and Library Road, Totton; and Paddy's Gap, Milford.

5. GREAT BALLARD LAKE, NEW MILTON (REPORT E) (MINUTE NO. 29)

The Committee, at their meeting in June 1999, agreed that works should be undertaken, in partnership with New Milton Town Council, to enable design work to proceed for the improvement of Great Ballard Lake. The Committee asked for a further report to identify a priority list of works for the site with appropriate costings.

However, the Committee have now been informed that in the first instance, Great Ballard Lake needs to be drained and the silt allowed to dry for 4-6 weeks before any works can commence. In view of this, New Milton Town Council's Amenity Committee have recommended that the works should be deferred to commence in July 2000. In the meantime the design details of the scheme will be finalised and the Town Council will continue to pursue sources of funding.

The Committee have therefore agreed that the scheme should now be carried out under a single contract commencing in July 2000 and have amended their budget accordingly.

6. AREA QUALITY MONITORING (REPORT I) (MINUTE NO. 33)

In order to continue the review and assessment of air quality in the district a Supplementary Credit Approval bid was made based on the requirement for precision monitoring equipment. The Committee were pleased to note that New Forest District Council was one of the few authorities where a full supplementary credit approval bid had been granted which would allow progress on work to monitor levels of air pollution in the District.

A specific diffusion survey had been carried out in the Totton area and the Committee noted that the results indicated that pollution levels were actually 50% below that required by air quality standards.

COUNCILLOR J WADDINGTON
CHAIRMAN

(Ctteemtg/Cttee/ES020999/Report)