

TRANSPORTATION SUB-COMMITTEE - 6 September 2001

Minutes of the meeting of the **Transportation Sub-Committee** held on **6 September 2001** when there were present:

Cllr R S Allen (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs J M Giles
Cllr J E Grey
Cllr Mrs J Helson
Cllr C C Langlands
Cllr C R Morgan

Cllr R A Pearson
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr Mrs M Vince
Cllr Mrs M J Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton – Head of Planning Services
S J Clarkson - Head of Revenue & Housing Management
M Goodman – Principal Solicitor
Ms S Worthington – Committee Administrator
Mr A Wyatt – Committee Administrator

176 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs J M Giles declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item on Transport and Social Exclusion Consultation (minute 182) by virtue of her mother being a resident of Hardwick House.

177 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 June 2001 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Minute 173 – Transport Act 2000

- (1) That a category of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage (Contract) Vehicles to accommodate those vehicles used specifically for the purpose of Contracts be created.
- (2) That a derogation be given to license those vehicles currently operating as small PCVs on contracts for an initial period of one year from 1 July 2001, subject to satisfactory inspection, thereby ensuring the continuance of existing contracts pending formulation of specific standards, conditions and guidelines in association with the Taxi Licensing Working Group.

178 REFERRALS FROM TAXI LICENSING WORKING GROUP

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Members considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on the key issues that arose at a meeting of the Taxi Licensing Working Group on 20 June 2001.

Following receipt of a letter, multiply-signed by Rochford District taxi plate holders, the Taxi Licensing Working Group had recommended that there be 8 advisers to the Working Group, including one from the Transport & General Workers Union.

During discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Did this Council formally recognise, in addition to NUPE (UNISON), other unions, such as The Transport & General Workers Union?

It was agreed that this issue should be raised at the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Members believed that a distinction should be made, on one hand, between the Transport & General Workers Union offering advice to drivers and, on the other, acting as formal representative.

Cllr Mrs J Helson moved a motion, seconded by Cllr Mrs J M Giles that was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That, subject to this Council formally recognising the Transport & General Workers Union, the consultative fora for this Council be
 - The Taxi Drivers Forum, comprising Councillors on the Taxi Licensing Working Group, Rochford District licence holders, and a paid employee of the Transport & General Workers Union.
 - The Taxi Circuit Owners Forum comprising Councillors on the Taxi Licensing Working Group and the taxi circuit owners.
- (2) That the two consultative fora report to the Transportation Sub-Committee. (HRHM)

179. THE APPROACH CAR PARK, RAYLEIGH – CAPITAL WORKS

Members discussed the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management asking them to consider additional funding for the improvement works at The Approach Car Park, Rayleigh.

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The original budget allocation was on the basis of estimates sought by Officers in 1999. Subsequently, there had been a mini-boom in the building/engineering industry. Only two of the five contractors selected by this Council responded to the letter of invitation. The lower of the tenders received would indicate a budget deficit of £11,096 to carry out the necessary works. It would be necessary to seek approval from the Finance & General Purposes Committee for this additional funding.

Consideration was given to reducing the specification, however Members felt it would not be prudent to downgrade the works.

During discussion, the following concerns were raised:

- The cost of lighting improvements at The Approach Car Park appeared to comprise 25% of the budget allocated for similar works to be conducted in all car parks.
- Lighting was an important element of the works; people leave their vehicles for prolonged periods and collect them after dark.
- Lighting should be positioned in such a way that properties facing the car park would not be disadvantaged.
- Improvement works should not be downgraded, particularly in the context of recent bad weather trends.
- What would be the implications of downgrading the improvement works proposals.

Subject to inclusion in the report to the Finance & General Purposes Committee of the impact of improvement works for the other car parks in addition to the Approach Car Park and clarification of the implications of downgrading these improvement works, it was:-

RECOMMENDED

That £11,096 be added to the capital programme for resurfacing and improvement works at the Approach Car Park. (HRHM)

180. CAR PARK CHARGES – EFFECTS OF NEW CHARGE STRUCTURE

Members received and noted the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management, which considered the effect of the introduction of revised car park charges on 11 September 2000. The main change was the removal of the 1 hour tariff in all car parks.

The majority of customers were now purchasing 2 hour tickets and accordingly staying in the town centres for longer periods of time. There has also been a marginal increase in income from the sale of those tickets.

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During discussion the importance was stressed of retaining the 20p tariff for 30 minute car parking.

181. HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARIFF REVIEW

Members considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management, which reviewed taxi fares in the District and sought approval for a revised tariff.

The proposed tariff in the schedule was in line with the Retail Price Index for motor transport costs, following the Sub-Committee's rejection of a report on 20 June 2001 which did not fit that criteria.

The bus operator, Arriva, had increased the cost of single fares by 25% and of return fares by 7.7%.

The Sub-Committee considered a tariff range proposed by licensed taxi drivers and submitted by the Transport and General Workers Union, which also attempted to align with the 3.6% RPI figure.

This proposal had a lower tariff for a 2-mile journey than that proposed by Officers. Drivers advised that a 2-mile journey was the average journey taken by customers. They believed that their proposed tariff particularly targeted the elderly and those living in sheltered accommodation.

During discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The revised tariff proposed by Officers was more acceptable than that submitted by drivers, as all fares increased uniformly.
- Once a revised tariff is agreed, it would have to be advertised and a consultation process would take place.
- Any objections raised during consultation to a revised tariff would have to be considered by this Sub-Committee.
- Increases would calibrate with taxi meters.
- Any future proposed tariff increases should be properly discussed at the Taxi Licensing Working Group fora.
- Future tariff increases should be linked to the RPI for motor transport costs.
- There would be a lot of debate about the revised tariff once consultation was underway.
- It was interesting to note that Councillors had not heard complaints about the high bus tariff increases. This was, in all probability, because this Council did not set those tariffs.
- It was interesting to note that Maldon District Council did not set taxi tariffs; taxi companies there set the tariffs according to market forces.
- The RPI for motor transport costs did not reflect increased public

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liability insurance premium costs and circuit radio rental costs.

- The proposed tariff increase was a maximum tariff; it did not detract from drivers offering special deals to customers.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the revised tariff for Hackney Carriages and meter fitted Private Hire Cars as set out in this report be approved.
- (2) That any future tariff increases be linked to the RPI for motor transport costs.
- (3) That the Head of Service proceeds to advertise the new fare structure to come into force on 1 November 2001. (HRHM)

182. TRANSPORT AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION CONSULTATION

Members considered the report of Head of Planning Services seeking views on a series of questions posed by the Social Exclusion Unit on the reasons why transport can prevent people from taking part in a range of activities.

The Social Exclusion Unit was tasked by the Prime Minister to look into the nature of transport barriers to accessing work, health care and other activities and to develop policies to remove them.

The report outlined a series of draft responses to the questions.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- The poor level of public transport provision in rural parts of the district, particularly during evenings and weekends, was an important social exclusion issue for the District.
- The District was complex; it was disadvantaged in that it could not apply for public service grants because many rural areas were within 3 miles of an urban conurbation.
- The report contained no reference to accessing Education, an important issue for the District.
- Question 28: It should be stressed that many elderly would not take advantage of Internet banking arrangements and would continue to collect their pensions from the Post Office for the foreseeable future.
- It would be beneficial to consult with County Council about comparable services in the area, as they have recently conducted extensive research into Transport Services.
- Question 12: This issue also applies to urban areas. Since the privatisation of bus companies the onus has been on profit rather

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than the provision of a quality service to the community. The residents of Hardwick House, for example, have to rely on taxis; despite requests to the bus company, a bus service does not run near Hardwick Close.

RECOMMENDED

That, subject to the additional comments from Members above, this report forms the basis of the Council's response to the Social Exclusion Unit's consultation on Transport and Social Exclusion. (HPS)

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman . _____