Appendix 3

LCT CORR.

...IVED
15 SEP 2014

Kim Evans
Licensing Officer
Cheshire East
Westfields
Middlewich Rd
Sandbach
Cheshire
CW11 1HZ

Top Cars Uk Ltd
...House

10/9/14

Dear Mrs Evans,

I refer to your recent letter advising of revised Hackney carriage tariffs in the Cheshire East Area.

Clearly the first set of tariff increases are virtually what we agreed at our meeting with Michael Jones, yourself, representatives of the three zones and David Rutley's caseworker.

You may remember that Michael Jones said " that there should be no harmonisation " and fortunately thanks to his commercial nous he realised that the proposed tariff as it was would have meant a substantial decrease in the income of the Crewe drivers something that he considered unacceptable in the current economic climate.

Had a similar proposal, to reduce the allowances and expenses of members of the licensing committee and the wages and pensions of members of the licensing team been mooted there, would have been uproar.

As one councillor glibly said to me there are winners and losers in every situation ,magnanimously said by someone who would have lost nothing.

As far as I can ascertain this concept of harmonisation has come about through complaints of overcharging although the number of complaints seems to have been less than ten!! There are an estimated 1.5 million taxi journeys in Cheshire East every

year and I know of no professional organisation that would base any strategy on a .00006 % problem. If the licensing committee were serious about addressing overcharging then enforcement officers have only to check out cabs on a Friday and Saturday night where the practice is rife.

I refer to previous correspondence regarding 8's and bonnets .The people of Cheshire East deserve a more professional approach to their affairs than having people trying to preserve their power status ignoring reasonable arguments both from the residents and the MAJORITY of Hackney carriage drivers.

The original proposals would have gone through if our MP David Rutley had not arranged the meeting with Michael Jones and it is fortunate that his commercial experience enabled him to quickly see that the proposals were utter nonsense. It took him about 5mins to work out an acceptable solution something the licensing team and committee hadn't been able to do over a three year period and incredibly when the legal notices were published there was the now famous clerical error omission of provision for waiting time.

Fortunately I do believe that the licensing committee and licensing team realise the woeful shortcomings in the original consultation process in that private hire operators hi jacked this process for their own ends. The larger private hire operators make their money by renting radios to Hackney carriage drivers. The minimum fare on one of the larger operators tariffs is £ 3-30. Often on these short journeys the meter would register less but the customer still pays the minimum on the operators tariff. That, I believe is illegal? That is why they were so keen on the original proposal of a £ 3-50 flag so as to enable them to trade within the law!!

Their suggestion of time and a half on a Sunday is not representative of Hackney drivers views.

Private hire operators on a Sunday normally use the standard rate tariff or at most add 50 pence per trip. There is very little Hackney business on a Sunday even at the time and a third rate because people know this and they ring private hire companies. Those people who do jump in Hackneys are horrified at the extra cost on a Sunday and these are not just people who are travelling out of town but people who travel to the local estates. If the time and a half on a Sunday were to be introduced I would warn people when they got in and I guarantee most of them would get out!!

Is it right to make Hackney's uncompetitive so that the people of Macclesfield will be forced to ring a private operator and have less choice?

Similarly in your proposed second phase you are introducing a new tariff at 10-30pm. This again is a private hire operator's "gimme" and for exactly the same reasons as the proposed Sunday rate. It will mean that people arriving on the busy trains from Manchester and London at this time who would normally jump in a cab on the rank will soon come to realise the increased rate and will be on the phone to the likes of Silvertown or Cab Co. Again you're restricting the choice of people.

I know you think your proposals are designed to put extra money into our pockets but it will not!! It will however put more money in to the private hire operators pockets which is where this all began. We know how our business works.

So on the initial phase the only point that most of us disagree with is the introduction of time and a half on a Sunday. Leave it as it is.

There is no time scale for the introduction of the other two phases suggested by Licensing and I understand that you are looking for feedback from the trade. Clearly the third phase doesn't give us harmonisation either so again there is no clear strategy in place. It is impossible in this economic climate to forecast what will happen in even one years time let alone over a five year period and the second two phases should be scrapped and the new tariff reviewed after two years.

Clearly there are a lot of variables to consider including a proper understanding of the economic impact of the Law Commission's' report and Michael Jones's statement about Cheshire West and Cheshire East coming together. Maybe we will harmonise our fares with Ellesmere Port.

This harmonisation strategy was based on a less than .0001 % problem so I would hope that the committee would at least have the good grace to listen to a far greater percentage of drivers?

This process, which started in 2011 has been a complete waste of resources and money resulting in the tariff proposals being published without provision for waiting time. Has anybody costed this flawed process?

The residents of Crewe, Congleton and Macclesfield care very little for the prices of commodities in the neighbouring zones whether it is groceries, petrol or taxi fares. The people who take short taxi journeys in their local borough are unlikely to take a similar journey in a neighbouring zone and have a problem.

What is the likelihood of that?

1.5 million taxi trips per year remember.

LCTCORR.

F.A.O.
Miss Kim Evans,
Licensing Team,
Municipal Buildings,
Earle Street,
Crewe,
CW1 2BJ

RECEIVED
16 SEP 2014

Mytax Taxis,

RE: Consultation – Changes to the Hackney Carriage Table of Fares

Dear Miss Evans,

Enclosed are my completed questions to the questionnaire and also some additional comments at the end that I would like to be considered as part of this consultation process.

Question 1:
Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be a benefit to the public?

A simplified table of fares across Cheshire East would most definitely be of benefit to the Public and also be seen as a fairer system. At the moment the variation of fares across Cheshire East only leads to confusion amongst the public as they are unsure why taxis in the same district charge very differently.

Question 2:
Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be an advantage or disadvantage to the licensed trade?

A simplified table of fares across Cheshire East would be of great benefit/advantage to the Licensed Trade. At the moment the variation of fares across Cheshire East creates an unfair system or "unlevel playing field". Taxi Owners in Cheshire East have to pay equal rates for vehicle licences, driver badges, vehicle tests, medicals, fuel and vehicle maintenance, yet depending on where they operate, fare charges vary for similar journeys. This makes it difficult for Taxi Firms in lower rated boroughs such as Congleton being able to compete equally with higher rated boroughs such as Crewe.

Question 3:
Will the phased harmonisation of the table of fares alleviate the concerns raised by the trade that harmonisation in one step would increase the fares too much?

The phased harmonisation of fares will alleviate concerns of fares rising too quickly and steeply in Congleton providing that the adjustments are spread over two to three years. If the phased harmonisation is completed in too

shorter timescale this will lead to added confusion for the public and also likely to lead to a drop in custom as many residents will be too quickly "priced out" of using taxis.

Please remember also that for every change made to the fare structure there is a charge to the operator of at least £25 made for each meter change and also the loss of half a day's trading while the vehicle meter is being altered.

Question 4:

Do you have any suggestions for a reasonable timescale for implementation? Or the intervals that each change should be made at?

I believe that to alleviate the problems highlighted in question 3 the timescales for implementation of each phase should be made at intervals of no less than 9 months and no greater than 12 months. Therefore the total process should take between 2 to 3 years.

Question 5:

Are there any other areas of the licensing process that you think should be harmonised?

I think that it would be of great benefit to the Trade if the testing stations were harmonised so that vehicle testing could be undertaken at any of the testing stations. At the moment Congleton Hackney vehicles can only be tested at Crewe some 14 miles away from where I'm based.

Another area that would benefit the Trade when acquiring a new vehicle would be to have the vehicle profiling (ie. photo taken) performed at the same time as the initial vehicle test rather than having to take the vehicle on a separate occasion to Crewe to have Neil Ennion take photographs. This is very costly to the trade, again losing several hours of trading for this exercise and the travel costs involved in taking the vehicle back to Crewe.

Another process that could be simplified is with Driver Badge renewals. Once a drivers badge is about to expire the same information has to be presented to the Council on each renewal, such as proof of address, National Insurance number, Passport etc.. There are certain pieces of information that remain the same throughout a driver's lifetime and once the Council has them on record then there should be little need to see them again. Coupled with the fact that drivers are facing it harder and harder to make a living and that many drivers are not declaring to pay tax to HMRC and jobs are being offered from some firms in Congleton as "Cash in hand", maybe an idea on renewal would be for the Council to ask to see previous year's Tax Return notice. This information would then display proof of address, NI Number and drivers name and address all in one legitimate document and prove that the driver had been declaring his income to the HMRC as a taxi driver.

Question 6:

Do you agree or disagree with the principles set out at the meeting on the 1st July 2014?

Residents first.....

I agree in principle that any changes should be in the interests of the public first, however, with taxi fare increases (ie. Congleton) the Council need to appreciate that the majority of residents will be biased/opposed towards any increases in fares and will favour lower fares compared to quality of vehicles. Therefore I feel it is necessary to phase the rises in Congleton over a lengthier period such as 3 years as to reduce the opposition from the public. I also believe that maximum age limits for vehicles should be set to force "greedy" operators to have to invest in newer vehicles.

Harmonisation.....

I disagree with the point that keeps arising that "it doesn't make sense for a taxi to be prohibited from picking up a fare following an out-of-area drop off". I have heard this point raised many times by Councillors at Council Meetings and the argument is deeply flawed. Unlike highly populated areas such as Manchester and London the probability of a new passenger requiring a taxi after an out-of-area drop off is almost zero. As a Hackney Carriage driver in Congleton I am flagged down by a member of the public no more than once per week so to assume that this would happen after an out of area drop off is farcical. What is more likely to happen if the three zones are merged is that taxis will congregate where the most trade can be found, in larger towns and at busy railway stations. This will have the effect of reducing the number of taxis in an area whilst increasing the numbers in others. Zoning forces set numbers of taxis to work in defined areas which is not open to discretion of the drivers. Another way of looking at this is to consider the Congleton Zone 1. Even though this Zone comprises of Congleton, Alsager, Sandbach, Middlewich and Holmes Chapel 99% of all the Zone 1 Hackney Taxis can only ever be found in Congleton (where the residents requiring most taxis can be found). Therefore Congleton, Alsager, Sandbach, Middlewich and Holmes Chapel Taxis are effectively already de-zoned/harmonised generating too many taxis in Congleton with not enough rank space and too few taxis in neighbouring areas. This would just happen on a larger scale if de-zoning across Cheshire East were to occur. Also please be aware that adding more taxis would not alleviate this problem either, as Macclesfield Taxis and Staffordshire Taxis are already operating in Congleton under Congleton Taxi Firms yet there seems to be no increase in taxis in other towns such as Holmes Chapel or Sandbach for example.

Clear and simple charges.....

Clear and Simple charges – I fully agree.

Protection of the public.....

Protection of the public – I fully agree and believe that simplifying the structure will enable the public to feel safe in the knowledge that whatever

Cheshire East Taxi they use they can be assured of the same fare pricing structure.

I would also like to make the following additional comments based on the proposed changes to the Hackney Carriage Table of Fares:-

- Taxi fares in Congleton and throughout Cheshire East have not altered for three years and it's long overdue for Congleton Taxi Firms to get an increase. I welcome the increased charges to the Congleton Hackney Tables of Fares.

- Harmonisation of the Table of Fares should happen because why should people of Cheshire East in Macclesfield and Crewe pay more for their taxis than people in Congleton? How can people within Cheshire East feel they are being treated equally by their Council if rates for taxis vary depending on where they live?

- "Unlevel Playing Field", how can Congleton Taxi Firms be expected to compete with Taxi Operators in the rest of Cheshire East by paying the same Licence Fees, Driver Badge Fees, Test Fees, fuel prices and vehicle maintenance costs yet charging less for their journeys? At the moment the system is "not fair".

- A major effect of low fares not increasing over many years can be seen in the age and state of the taxis themselves. The majority of Taxis are over 7 years old with many of them over 10 years old. Some of these vehicles have travelled over a quarter of a million miles. How can this be in the best interest of the Public? Business vehicles need to be replaced periodically and not increasing fare rates over long periods of time prevents Taxi Firms from investing in the future of the service.

- I agree that some customers on low incomes will be affected indirectly by any increase in fares, however, we must remember that the proposed rates are a maximum charge and it is up to the discretion of the driver whether or not to charge the customers less.

- If this proposal is rejected then I believe the Taxi Trade will be expected to continue for several more years on fares set back in 2011 – Zone 1 needs a rise!

Yours Faithfully

From:
Sent: 03 September 2014 08:54
To: LICENSING (Cheshire East)
Subject: Proposed Increase in Taxi fares

My disabled son is a frequent user of Taxi services in Congleton and it is with some concern that I read of Cheshire East Councils intention to raise the cost of Taxi fares by a significant amount.

Clearly as costs rise for taxi service providers then it is necessary to raise prices, but the proposed rises indicated in the local press and identified through conversations with local Taxi drivers, appear to go far and beyond those of inflation and from what I can understand appear more related to an harmonisation of prices across the wider Cheshire area rather than "local" needs.

This is both unfair and inappropriate for Congleton, not only will it apply significant additional financial costs to those people less able (e.g. my son and a number of his disabled friends) who are highly dependent on taxi services, but it will also further impact town centre shops & businesses, who are already under pressure, by adding further cost to visits to the town for many people.

Additionally it is apparent through my conversations with Taxi service providers it is not something they want!

1) I would like to take this opportunity to object strongly to approval of "above inflation rises" to taxi fare in Congleton.
2) I would request that Cheshire East Council look at the wider picture when making their decision relating to these increases.
3) Don't drive our small independent business out of Business through "big brother tactics" Fair competition is good but, interference by state authorities is not.
4) Listen closely to those who work in the business, they are operating at the "coal face" and have the closest interaction with the users of those services.

Best Regards

Concerned resident of Congleton

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From:
Sent: 23 September 2014 10:35
To: LICENSING (Cheshire East)
Subject: consultation on taxi phased harmonisation

My response to a 'Residents First' council, as stated on the letter addressed to all those concerned about the Taxi harmonisation is an absolute joke!!
How can increased the fares help the local residents of congleton and the local businesses?? When i occasionally get a taxi from mossley into the town centre it already costs £12.00 return and thats ridiculous, for a 3 mile round trip give or take?
Has anyone thought about the implications regarding public safety too? Just four weeks ago after returning from work at 2am, a deranged lady was squatting in the middle of the road on Park lane, holding traffic up, obviously very dangerous, and unstable! If anyone wanted to go out in Congleton with the price increase, they would attempt to walk home instead, that isn't safe, i know, I've attempted it before when no taxis were available.
I like to think that i could take care of myself to a certain degree, but when the relevant people find out that more people walk home after a night out, the consequences are quite frightening!
What about the younger 19 to 25 years old girls walking back, scantily clad as they always are, would you want your daughter, son walking home late at night? I certainly wouldn't let mine!
The residents of Congleton would simply go elsewhere, i.e. a train to manchester return is only £8.90 and even cheaper if you get a duo ticket!
Regarding the local residents who rely on taxis with health problems, learning disabilities etc, how can you put in a 'Harmonisation' that affects these very needy, struggling people? These people do not deserve this treatment and it will cause very solitary lifestyles for them as they can't afford to go out, that is not acceptable and surely a human rights issue is here?!
I feel that Congleton is a struggling town to a certain aspect, and by putting this ridiculous harmonisation in place it will definitely finish the town off, particularly the night scene, so the local bars and restaurants would suffer greatly, it would turn into a ghost town, that nobody would bother to go out at nighttime, and the daytime trade too would suffer for the people reliant on using taxis as a form of transport.
Every aspect of the proposal from Congleton Town Council that i have read, is a far more realistic proposal as they know what is right for our town, moving forward, we care about our town and its residents, please don't jeprodise this by killing our local community.

Quigleys wine and cocktail bar

Riverside Taxis

LCTCOMM

RECEIVED

24 SEP 2014

Questions

This is an open consultation process and any views expressed will be taken into consideration. However, the Licensing Authority does seek views on the following:

1. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be a benefit to the public? If no, please state why
The answer is No. The public in Crewe, Macclesfield or Congleton have little or no interest in fares in other towns. Most are regular users and know what there fare is, in all my years of the Taxi trade I have never had any comment about fares in Crewe or Macclesfield from any customer in my taxi. It is not a problem, it is only the Council that want it to be a problem.

2. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be an advantage or disadvantage to the licensed trade? Please state why
Disadvantage. The fares and tariffs are fine, they have been at different levels for years, and for very different reasons. Crewe, and Macclesfield are very much different towns to Congleton and have tariffs to reflect there public. Congleton is not in the same league as it's two bigger local towns, so has adopted a different table of fares for that reason. This is all about you the Council, deregulating and nothing about the public or us the Taxi Trade.

3. Will the phased harmonisation of the table of fares alleviate the concerns raised by the trade that harmonisation in one step would increase the fares too much?

Since this obsession began of harmonisation, its plain and simple that a mile fare of £2-90 in Congleton and a mile fare of £4·20 in Crewe is never going to be harmonised, and even with all your ridiculus efforts Crewe will still be more expensive and on a different tariff.

Your phased harmonisation is putting too much cost onto the public, fares should only go up because of costs, or inflation, not because a Council Member is trying to justify his or her place on the Council and making a name for themselves.

4. Do you have any suggestions for a reasonable timescale for implementation? Or the intervals that each change should be made at? (ie 6 monthly, yearly, or varying intervals).

Never

Fares and tariffs should be looked at on a 12 - 18 month basis, and costs such as fuel, Council costs, inflation rates etc. should be considered. I don't think harmonisation over any time scale will work

5. Are there any other areas of the licensing process that you think should be harmonised? If yes please give examples

The vehicle testing since Cheshire East came about, is nothing short of a disaster, so much debate could be had if we ever had any contact with the council

The Council could harmonise the amount of plates, just reading the press, it becomes evident that there are way too many taxi in Macclesfield. Harmonise the plates, stop issuing plates except M type disabled.

6. Do you agree or disagree with the principles set out at the meeting on the 1st July 2014?

Residents first. Taxis are a public service and the interests of the service users are paramount. However, taxi owners and drivers are also residents of CE and we have to strike a balance between the interests of the public and the interests of the Trade. If fares are set too low, the quantity and *quality of taxi provision* will suffer which is not in the interests of the public.

Harmonisation. We have three zones as a result of historical accident and my goal is to have a single zone. It doesn't make sense for a taxi to be prohibited from picking up a fare following an out-of-area drop off. We also need to standardise testing and inspection, vehicle conditions and the regulation of the number of licences. Harmonisation of fares is more difficult as we have three very different fare cards and immediate harmonisation would produce winners and losers but please very few. I therefore propose to move progressively towards harmonisation over a few years.

The three zones were not a historical accident, the 3 zones worked very well for decades, its Cheshire East that is the accident, just because you have an idea it doesn't mean it is a good one. And with Mr Jones talking about Cheshire being one again, all this is even more ridiculas.

Clear and simple charges. The charging structure is too complicated and there are too many different tariffs. The paying public should know what they are going to pay irrespective of which zone they are in. I therefore propose to move to a simpler structure across the zones with a view to harmonised tariffs in due course.

A customer gets a taxi in Congleton, Crewe, Leeds Manchester, Biddulph, Stoke etc, etc pay the local tariff for that town or city. That's how it is and how the public know how it works. Congleton is closer to Biddulph than Crewe or Macclesfield there tariffs are different, so why should Crewe and Congleton not be different. What is wrong with you

Protection of the public

Cheshire East was born out of a political ~~[illegible]~~ mis mash, and could just as easily disappear ~~[illegible]~~ Cheshire East is a geographic ~~[illegible]~~ nonentity, different fares and tariffs in different towns is how it has worked since time began, and it has worked well.

The Councils proposals are not required, leave things as they have worked for decades, there are some harmonising that could take place, but after all this time, Crewe would still be on a different tariff.

Towns and City's all over the country have had different tariffs to suit there local needs, the Council are in my view making a problem that the public or the taxi trade have ever viewed an opinion on. The bigger problem is out of town illegal taxis, but the council do nothing about that, the "residents first" idea doesn't work with that one.

LCTCOMR RC

24 SEP 2014

RECEIVED

Questions

This is an open consultation process and any views expressed will be taken into consideration. However, the Licensing Authority does seek views on the following:

1. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be a benefit to the public? If no, please state why

Simplified tables of fares already exist. A taxi fare is shown on the meter in each taxi, which is all that is required.

Concern a) Why should fares be upgraded if there are more than 4 passengers in taxi. Would there not be comments for example, children should be half price?

concern b) Late night fares are commonly called double fares. This has been exploited by some new taxi drivers who actually charge double. The confusion is caused by the late night charge being fare 2 on the meter.

2. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be an advantage or disadvantage to the licensed trade? Please state why

Disadvantage

This question obviously relates to a policy of removing the three zones.

3. Will the phased harmonisation of the table of fares alleviate the concerns raised by the trade that harmonisation in one step would increase the fares too much?

Fares should only be altered in relation to fair increases due to inflation.

Harmonisation of taxi fares should only relate to a national policy of all taxi fares being the same.

Taxi provision is a local issue with fares according to local situations

4. Do you have any suggestions for a reasonable timescale for implementation? Or the intervals that each change should be made at? (ie. 6 monthly, yearly, or varying intervals).

In general taxi fares should be examined annually and by agreement increases should be considered taking into account inflation, alteration of fuel costs, alteration of insurance costs and alteration of Cluhir fuel costs.

5. Are there any other areas of the licensing process that you think should be harmonised? If yes please give examples

Vehicle testing and licensing should be available in the Congleton area. Because Cheshire East is just a political area this testing and licensing facility should also be available for use by Macclesfield and Crewe based taxi proprietors and drivers

6. Do you agree or disagree with the principles set out at the meeting on the 1st July 2014?

Residents first. Taxis are a public service and the interests of the service users are paramount. However, taxi owners and drivers are also residents of CE and we have to strike a balance between the interests of the public and the interests of the Trade. If fares are set too low, the quantity and quality of taxi provision will suffer which is not in the interests of the public.

Yes

I am not aware of any complaint relating to poor provision of taxi service caused by local taxi fares being too small. Surely this country operates on a system of supply and demand. If fares are too high there will be no demand - No demand leads to no taxis

Harmonisation. We have three zones as a result of historical accident and my goal is to have a single zone. It doesn't make sense for a taxi to be prohibited from picking up a fare following an out-of-area drop off. We also need to standardise testing and inspection, vehicle conditions and the regulation of the number of licences. Harmonisation of fares is more difficult as we have three very different fare cards and immediate harmonisation would produce winners and losers but please very few. I therefore propose to move progressively towards harmonisation over a few years.

My goal, as well as all other local taxi drivers is a fair, legal, service, to members of the public - this has been interrupted lately by the actions of Cheshire East Council.

Clear and simple charges. The charging structure is too complicated and there are too many different tariffs. The paying public should know what they are going to pay irrespective of which zone they are in. I therefore propose to move to a simpler structure across the zones with a view to harmonised tariffs in due course.

We DO not have teleportation yet
Someone getting into a taxi in City Centre or in Mansfield for in Grove should pay the same for that area. This is how it would be if they hailed a cab in London or Glasgow or

Protection of the public

From: Cong Town Council
Sent: 24 September 2014 14:50
To: LICENSING (Cheshire East)
Cc: Mike Smith
Subject: Taxi Harmonisation Consultation

To Whom it May Concern

As Congleton Town Centre Manager I would like to add my support to the alternative proposals put forward by Congleton Taxi Companies to improve the taxi service around Congleton They provide a clear and simple charging structure that should satisfy, residents, taxi trade and Cheshire East Council. They would provide a greater degree of harmonisation, but would allow some necessary flexibility in the three zones, will provide protection and certainty to the public and demonstrate that Cheshire East is a Resident First council.

1. £3.10 or £3.20 flag fall across all three zones and then apply the current fare charges once the vehicle is moving.
2. £2.00 per mile after the first mile.
3. £50.00 soilage charge.
4. 11.30pm time and half until 7.00am.
5. Sundays and Bank Holidays time and half.
6. Christmas Day & New Year's Day double time.
7. £24.00 per hour waiting time (40p per minute).
8. A 3 tariff structure across the 3 zones:-

Tariff 1 = Day rate 7.00am – 11.30pm
Tariff 2 = Night rate 11.30pm – 7.00am All day Sundays and Bank Holidays
Tariff 3 = Christmas Day and New Year's Day

9. 30p extra for more than 1 passenger to be removed.
10. Scrap the proposal of vehicle age and replace with extra MOT checks in a year.
11. Scrap the idea of de-zoning.

My main concerns with the current proposals are

1. The people delivering the service in Congleton don't think it will work and don't appear to want the increases
2. It is not a 'Resident First' policy – the prices over the three phases rising considerably for Congleton
3. Congleton does not currently enjoy a good public transport service and so many elderly residents, people with disability and those without a car who are at greatest risk of social isolation rely on taxis for essentials – shopping, doctors trips etc
4. Starting the evening tariff at 10pm rather than 11.30 could have a detrimental impact on the evening economy which we a trying hard to encourage to grow.

Regards

Jackie

Jackie MacArthur
Congleton Town Centre and Marketing Manager
Congleton Town Council

Taxi Fare Harmonisation Consultation Response on behalf of Congleton Town Council

The phased harmonisation of Cheshire East Council's Tables of Fares set out by Cheshire East Council seems to have a large disproportionate negative affect on the residents of Congleton and the taxi firms operating within Congleton.

It provides a period of continual change and uncertainty as well as an unprecedented level of fare and other charges increase that is not wanted by the paying public, the trade themselves and will have a negative impact on the trade and business of Congleton Town Centre and other retail and commercial sites within the town.

The proposals for Congleton will have a tremendous negative impact on a number of key users of the current taxi services offered.

It will impact on residents who have no vehicle transport of their own who are from low income or disadvantaged families who rely on taxi's to do their shopping in the town. These families are already experiencing financial difficulties due to welfare changes and other factors and to add a large percentage increase on an essential service will impact on these difficulties further.

Also many of the current customers are pensioners and or have disabilities. By putting fares up by the levels suggested would have a disproportionate impact on this group and this is very likely to increase the level of social isolation they experience.

The sector is seeing a fragile recovery in the level of trade which is what is being seen within the retail sector too. Putting up fares at the level suggested could hamper this fragile recovery.

There appears from feedback from the local taxi trade that this issue is being pursued by Cheshire East Council officers and some councillors which is not in keeping with Cheshire East Council's Residents First approach.

There also appears to be no acknowledgement of the differences between the major towns across the borough and their different needs.

The suggested changes to the night rate will have a detrimental impact on the town's night time economy which Congleton Town Council is supporting the development of quality eating, drinking and entertainment establishments. Taxis are vital due to a severe lack of public transport and the obvious need to comply with the drink / drive laws.

The current numbers of taxi rank spaces at the only taxi rank in the town has capacity for only 8 and at times this is insufficient. By harmonising fares this will inevitably lead to an influx of taxis from other towns if the council would now have the opportunity to de-zone. The town council understands that the law commission has done a u-turn on its recommendation to abolishing zones. The influx of taxis from out of town would inevitably mean increased competition at the rank and with insufficient space taxi's will be travelling around town waiting until a space becomes available thus increasing pollution and increasing running costs.

There is no public request to de-zone or harmonise fares across the borough. What they want in their own town is a fair and clear table of fares and charges that are affordable to provide a quality service that is sustainable. What is being proposed by Cheshire East Council undermines this need.

Cheshire East Council is proposing a 7 year age cap for vehicles. This could force many Congleton based taxi's out of business due to the cost of new vehicles and setting up a new taxi is very expensive. What they propose instead which we support is more regular and vigorous tests of

existing vehicles by having two MOT tests or equivalent in between the yearly council test which would mean three tests a year for vehicles over 6 or 7 years old at a local authorised station. This will help to ensure vehicles are maintained to a high standard.

Detailed below are some alternative proposals from the Congleton based Taxi firms which we believe are sensible, workable and won't have a detrimental negative impact on the public who rely on their service. They would provide a clear and simple charging structure that should satisfy, residents, taxi trade and Cheshire East Council. They would provide a greater degree of harmonisation, but would allow some necessary flexibility in the three zones, will provide protection and certainty to the public and demonstrate that Cheshire East is a Resident First council.

1. £3.10 or £3.20 flag fall across all three zones and then apply the current fare charges once the vehicle is moving.
2. £2.00 per mile after the first mile.
3. £50.00 soilage charge.
4. 11.30pm time and half until 7.00am.
5. Sundays and Bank Holidays time and half.
6. Christmas Day & New Year's Day double time.
7. £24.00 per hour waiting time (40p per minute).
8. A 3 tariff structure across the 3 zones:-

Tariff 1 = Day rate 7.00am – 11.30pm

Tariff 2 = Night rate 11.30pm – 7.00am All day Sundays and Bank Holidays

Tariff 3 = Christmas Day and New Year's Day

9. 30p extra for more than 1 passenger to be removed.
10. Scrap the proposal of vehicle age and replace with extra MOT checks in a year.
11. Scrap the idea of de-zoning.

Glen Williams, Chairman, Congleton Town Council Community Environment & Services Committee

Paul Bates, Vice Chairman, Congleton Town Council Community, Environment & Services Committee

Questions

This is an open consultation process and any views expressed will be taken into consideration. However, the Licensing Authority does seek views on the following:

1. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be a benefit to the public? If no, please state why
YES ;

2. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be an advantage or disadvantage to the licensed trade? Please state why
ADVANTAGE : (i) ENABLE TRADING ACCROSS THE WHOLE OF CHESHIRE EAST (ii) SIMPLIFY RETURNS ON FUEL etc. (iii) FARE CUSTOMER CONCERNS IE ONE CHARGE FOR 1 MILE - NO EXTRAS - REDUCING COMPLAINTS AND INCREASING CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE IN PRICE CHARGED (iv) SIMPLER TO ADMINISTOR BY COUNCIL ENABLING IN FLATIONARY INCREASES TO BE GIVEN ON AN ANNUAL BASIS RATHER THAN AS IS THE CURRENT SITUATION RETROSPECTIVE INCREASE - ENSURING BETTER LIVING STANDARDS FOR DRIVERS & INCREASING RETURN FOR COUNCIL (v)

3. Will the phased harmonisation of the table of fares alleviate the concerns raised by the trade that harmonisation in one step would increase the fares too much?
YES

4. Do you have any suggestions for a reasonable timescale for implementation? Or the intervals that each change should be made at? (ie 6 monthly, yearly, or varying intervals).
EVERY 6 MTHS – IE 18 MTHS TO COMPLETE 3 PHASES. DATES TO BE ADVISED AND AGREED ONCE PHASE 1 HAS BEEN AUTHORISED – EVERYONE THEN KNOWS WHERE THEY ARE – EXHIBITING CLEAR LEADERSHIP FROM THE COUNCIL – WITH THE CONSTANT THAT AT 24 MTHS FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE 1 AN INFORMATIONAL REVIEW SHOULD BE MADE – ENABLING THE COUNCIL TO MAKE TO INCREASE FARES TO REFLECT PRICES INDEX = PRESENTING A TRANSPARENT VIEW TO THE PUBLIC/TRADE AND COUNCIL OF HOW A FARE HAS BEEN ARRIVED AT. END OF HAND WRINGING

5. Are there any other areas of the licensing process that you think should be harmonised? If yes please give examples

YES - AS PER 6 BELOW - ESPECIALLY VEHICLE SIZE - A TAXI LICENCED FOR 4 SHOULD REASONABLY ACCOMODATE 4 ADULT PASSENGERS AND SHOULD BE OF FARES MODIFIED OR ITS TYPE SIZE. EXTERIOR DIMENSIONS OF LESS IMPORTANCE.

6. Do you agree or disagree with the principles set out at the meeting on the 1st July 2014?

Residents first. Taxis are a public service and the interests of the service users are paramount. However, taxi owners and drivers are also residents of CE and we have to strike a balance between the interests of the public and the interests of the Trade. If fares are set too low, the quantity and quality of taxi provision will suffer which is not in the interests of the public.

Agree

Harmonisation. We have three zones as a result of historical accident and my goal is to have a single zone. It doesn't make sense for a taxi to be prohibited from picking up a fare following an out-of-area drop off. We also need to standardise testing and inspection, vehicle conditions and the regulation of the number of licences. Harmonisation of fares is more difficult as we have three very different fare cards and immediate harmonisation would produce winners and losers but please very few. I therefore propose to move progressively towards harmonisation over a few years.

Agree

Clear and simple charges. The charging structure is too complicated and there are too many different tariffs. The paying public should know what they are going to pay irrespective of which zone they are in. I therefore propose to move to a simpler structure across the zones with a view to harmonised tariffs in due course.

AGREE – 1 MILE – 1 CHARE – 10/10 THS – EVERY 10 TH THEREIN 1 CHARGE
– UNSOCIAL HRS SURCHARE
– FAIR WAITING TIME CHARGE TO BOTH CUSTOMER & DRIVER AT LEAST CORRESPONDING MIN WAGE
– LEGALLY ENFORCEABLE SOLACE CHARE

Protection of the public – OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE BUT WHAT ABOUT PROTECTION OF THE DRIVER – I THINK SOMETIMES TAXI DRIVERS VULNERABILITY IS IGNORED – WE KNOW WE ARE ON AFTERALL WE HAVE BEEN CHECKED & SCRUTINISED TO SEE IF WE ARE OF GOOD ENOUGH CHARACTER TO HOLD A LICENCE SOME OF OUR CUSTOMERS ARE LESS THAN HONOURABLE SOME POSSITIVELY VICIOUS

Miss Kim Evans
Licensing Team
Municipal Buildings
Earle Street
Crewe
CW1 2BJ

Questions

This is an open consultation process and any views expressed will be taken into consideration. However, the Licensing Authority does seek views on the following:

1. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be a benefit to the public? If no, please state why
No. Whilst a common fares structure might be a benefit, harmonizing fares themselves does not take into account the differing socio-economic structures of the three areas. By the time the final phase is implemented, the size of the increase for the Congleton area, **which unlike the other two zones has little/no public transport after 6pm Monday – Saturday and at any time Sunday**, will put regular use of taxis beyondthe economic reach of a significant proportion of the current passenger population.

2. Do you think that a simplified table of fares in force across the whole of Cheshire East would be an advantage or disadvantage to the licensed trade? Please state why
An advantage to those working out of Crewe & Nantwich and Macclesfield. A definite disadvantage for those based in Congleton. The proposed changes to fares will make it more lucrative for Crewe & Nantwich / Macclesfield drivers to travel to Congleton hoping to pick up trade, making it more difficult for the locally-based drivers to earn a living from a customer base likely to be reduced by the increased costs.

3. Will the phased harmonisation of the table of fares alleviate the concerns raised by the trade that harmonisation in one step would increase the fares too much?
Yes, to a certain extent. It will not, however, alleviate the concerns raised over the eventual size of the increases – particularly for Congleton – *per se*.

4. Do you have any suggestions for a reasonable timescale for implementation? Or the intervals that each change should be made at? (ie 6 monthly, yearly, or varying intervals).
Yearly at the fastest.

5. Are there any other areas of the licensing process that you think should be harmonised? If yes please give examples

6. Do you agree or disagree with the principles set out at the meeting on the 1st July 2014?
Residents first. Taxis are a public service and the interests of the service users are paramount. However, taxi owners and drivers are also residents of CE and we have to strike a balance between the interests of the public and the interests of the Trade. If fares are set too low, the quantity and quality of taxi provision will suffer which is not in the interests of the public.
Disagree – the higher the fare the more drivers, of varying quality, will appear to try and get "a share of the pot". Further, encouraging "out of town" drivers to ply for hire, who neither know the customers nor the area well, will inevitably lead to a decline in the overall quality of service received.
Harmonisation. We have three zones as a result of historical accident and my goal is to have a single zone. It doesn't make sense for a taxi to be prohibited from picking up a fare following an out-of-area drop off. We also need to standardise testing and inspection, vehicle conditions and the regulation of the number of licences. Harmonisation of fares is more difficult as we have three very different fare cards and immediate harmonisation would produce winners and losers but please very few. I therefore propose to move progressively towards harmonisation over a few years.
Standardisation of testing and vehicle conditions/inspections is a sensible move. The differences between existing 3 zones are not due to "a historic accident", but arose due the different nature of the towns within them. Harmonisation of the fares **structure** makes a degree of sense, but why can't the **prices** charged be based on the location the journey starts from (as now – the meter rate doesn't suddenly change when the vehicle crosses from the old Congleton borough into Macclesfield or Crewe)?
Clear and simple charges. The charging structure is too complicated and there are too many different tariffs. The paying public should know what they are going to pay irrespective of which zone they are in. I therefore propose to move to a simpler structure across the zones with a view to harmonised tariffs in due course.
As above, simplification of the **structure** may make sense, but at least within the Congleton area, people regularly travel beyond the bounds of the zone (to Biddulph, Kidsgrove, the Potteries, Manchester, etc) and are used to paying different rates depending on which taxi they hire for their return journey. A clear display of the price on the meter gives a more than adequate indication of what the fare is going to be at the end of the journey!
Protection of the public Questionable, *as per* comments above regarding "out of area" drivers.