

Outcome of the Non-Statutory Hackney Carriage Tariffs Consultation with the Taxi Trade - 2024

Background

West Berkshire Council is committed to balancing the legitimate aims of the taxi trade to maintain profitability in the face of increasing costs, while protecting the public from excessive fares. The current hackney carriage fare scale came into effect on the 19 June 2023.

A proposed revised tariff scheme was submitted by the trade on the 26 December 2023. The proposal was considered by the Licensing Committee at the meeting on the 08 January 2024 and you can read more about it [here](#). [[West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Licensing Committee on Monday, 8th January, 2024, 4.30 pm](#)]

The procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements is stipulated within section 65 of the [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#). The procedure is prescriptive and requires that a decision to make/vary a table of fares is made first. Following this, there is a statutory consultation requirement, to allow for any objections to the new table to be made. The remainder of the process is dependent on whether any objections are received (and not withdrawn).

What Was Proposed

In summary the trade has suggested that:

- For 2024 they would like to see an uplift of the maximum tariffs by about 3.02% for a two mile journey at tariff 1 rates i.e. from £8.60 to £8.68.
- They proposed that the initial flag rate is not changed, and the increase be achieved by reducing the yardage (mileage per unit) for tariffs 1, 2 and 3.
- The separate tariffs for saloon and multi seater vehicles carrying five or more passengers be retained i.e. tariffs 1b, 2b and 3b.
- They did not propose increasing the tariffs for multi seater vehicles carrying five or more passengers (tariffs 1b, 2b and 3b)
- They would like the maximum fouling charges to be revisited and a variable fouling charge in line with the tariff to be introduced This proposal is designed to take into consideration that it may be more difficult to get vehicles cleaned at certain times of the day and that fouling could result in greater loss of earnings to the owner and driver.

The Licensing Committee agreed that, although not a statutory requirement, prior to any modifications being taken to the Executive for determination an informal consultation should be undertaken with the trade to establish the level of support for the proposed changes.

The Licensing Committee proposed the following timetable for considering any modifications to the tariffs in 2024:

Activity/ Decision making body	Date
Initial Discussion at Licensing Committee	08 January 2024
Informal (non-statutory) consultation with the trade	15 January to 29 January 2024
Pre consultation item at Executive (after going through the Council's internal governance cycle)	14 March 2024
If the Executive is minded to approve the Consultation it is proposed that	
Consultation	21 March – 04 April 2024 (must be a minimum of 14 days)
Implementation if no objections	05 April 2024
If objections are received Executive (after going through the Council's internal governance cycle)	16 May 2024
Implementation	17 May 2024
Report back to Licensing Committee on Outcome	July 2024

Who and How we Consulted

The Licensing Committee requested that an informal (non-statutory) consultation be undertaken with the trade to ascertain the level of support for the trade's proposal. A consultation document was emailed to all Operators and Drivers of Hackney Carriages on the 15 January 2024. The trade was invited to respond to an online questionnaire or to email or write to PPP Consultations directly if they found that easier. The two-week informal consultation ran until the 29 January 2024.

What You Told Us

The Council received nine responses to the survey which is the same as the number received to the 2023 survey. Of those respondents six identified themselves as WBC Licensed Hackney Carriage Drivers, two as WBC Licensed Operators and one Meter Agent. Of those responses three completed the online survey and six emailed responses were received.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree with the proposal to introduce a variable fouling charge in line with the tariff?

Response:

- Four respondents answered this question.
- Two respondents (50%) agreed or strongly agreed with this suggestion. Both are drivers.

- Two respondents (50%), both operators disagreed with the proposal.

Comments

None received

Question 3: To what extent do you agree with the proposed maximum tariffs set out in the submission for the trade in relation to fouling charges? Currently they are charged at a maximum of £100 interior and £25 Exterior for all tariffs. The proposal is that:

	Tariff 1	Tariff 1b	Tariff 2	Tariff 2b	Tariff 3	Tariff 3b
Exterior	£150	£150	£225	£225	£300	£300
Interior	£50	£50	£75	£75	£100	£100

Response:

- Four respondents answered this question.
- Two respondents (50%) agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed maximum tariffs for fouling charges. Both respondents were drivers.
- Two operators responded. One disagreed with the proposal and one stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with it albeit that they commented that 'I believe £150 should be the interior fee in line with loss of earnings and cost of cleaning.'

In 2023 the Trade commented:

<p>Interior: 4 respondents stated that £100 would be more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £150 would be more appropriate; 2 respondent stated that £200 would be more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £250 would be more appropriate; 1 person did not respond to this question</p>
<p>Exterior: 5 respondents stated that £25 was acceptable; 2 respondents did not respond to this question; 1 respondent stated that £50 was more appropriate; 1 respondent stated that £75 was more appropriate.</p>

Comments

I believe £150 should be the interior fee in line with loss of earnings and cost of cleaning

Shocking charges !!

Question 4: To what extent do you agree with the request that all meters must be capable of being time and date controlled?

Response:

- Four respondents opted to answer this question.
- One driver and one operator (50%) strongly agreed with the request that all meters should be capable of being time and date controlled.
- One driver neither agreed nor disagreed.
- One operator strongly disagreed with the proposal.
- In 2023 78% respondents strongly agreed with the statement and 22% respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal.

Comments

Makes an equal playing field
As a paying. Customer it will be great to see the right information

Question 5: If the tariffs are to be modified in 2024 what would be your preference?

Response:

- We received eight responses to this question (six from drivers and two from operators)
- 100% of the respondents indicated that they did not want the tariffs to increase in 2024.

Comments

high enough
I recently received an email regarding fare increase in my opinion this is unacceptable because we are living in a crisis at the moment and in last one year our fare increased by around 16% so if we increase the fare more that's like losing more customers also killing our taxi trade so I would highly suggest the council not to increase the fare anymore
I disagree, I don't want any tariff increase at the moment

Question 6: The submission from the trade sets out an uplift of the tariffs of 3.02% for a 2 mile journey during tariff 1 operating hours. To what extent would you support this proposal?

Response:

- We received five responses to this question. Two from operators and three from drivers.
- All somewhat or strongly opposed this proposal.

Comments

We have had enough rate rises in past couple of years.
We get enough stick now fuel has dropped a lot over the last few months I believe with the increases we have had and the drop in fuel postpone increase this year
It's already high enough and customers are moaning and complaining each time - this will see us back in the press soon if charges go up.
I like to confirm you that I strongly disagree on any further fare increase this year. The fare is already high and it will be really unfair for the customers if we try make any further increase at this time.

Question 7: The submission from the trade does not propose any changes to the tariffs for multi seater vehicles carrying five or more passengers (see tariffs 1b, 2b and 3b). To what extent would you support this proposal?

Response:

- Three respondents opted to answer this question, one driver and two operators.
- The driver strongly opposed this proposal albeit that they did not wish to see the overall tariffs increased this year.
- One of the operators did not oppose or support this suggestion.
- One operator somewhat supported the proposal.

Comments

Again current charges are crazy - the trade need to be careful as to what they see fit to charge
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Question 8: If the Executive is minded to amend the tariffs to what extent do you agree with the suggestion that the flag rate should not be changed?

Response:

- Three respondents (two operators and one driver) answered this question.
- They all agreed or strongly agreed that the flag rate should not be changed.
- In 2023 5 respondents strongly agreed with this suggestion; 1 respondent agreed with retaining the current flag rate; 3 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal; None of the respondents objected to the suggestion.

Comments

No comments were received.

Question 9: Do you have any further comments you would like to make:

Comments

Taximeters generally have 1 numeric digit for the tariff indicator, so the tariffs should be numbered 1 to 6.

The first mile calculations are incorrect, the meter starts at £5.00 and increases in 40p units therefore it's impossible for the meter to read £5.83. For T1 the fare will be a minimum of £6.20 at the mile.

The initial waiting time is not on the sheet. In T1 the initial time would be 231 seconds for £5.00 then 40p for 42 secs ($1276.5/232.1 =$ a ratio of 5.5 therefore there must be 5.5 units of time for the initial fare).

The way it should be laid out is:

T1 1276.5 yards or 231 seconds £5.00

Then 232.1 yards or 42 seconds 40p

Fuel prices are more at less back to normal now -even though inflation has gone wild but relatively I think the current tariffs are high enough when our neighbouring counties are a lot less expensive than west berks

We had a fare increase last year and people already not happy with our new tariff as it's too much. Therefore I'm strongly disagree to increase fare and scare away our customers from using taxi services.

What We Are Proposing To Do

The outcome of the non-statutory consultation will be sent to all members of the West Berkshire Taxi Trade and will be published on the Public Protection Partnership website. It will also be circulated to Members of the Licensing Committee and the Portfolio Holder. It will help to inform the report to the Executive and will be included as an attachment to that report.

The outcome of this initial consultation will be taken to a Special Licensing Committee meeting on the 04 March 2024 where Members will be asked to discuss the outcome of the non-statutory consultation.

The outcome of the non-statutory informal consultation and the comments from the Special Licensing Committee will be fed into the report which will be taken to the Executive meeting on the **14 March 2024**. The Executive will make a decision about any proposed modifications and the methodology for undertaking the required statutory consultation and timetabling if the Executive is minded to consult. These decisions will be undertaken in accordance with the procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements as stipulated within section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

If changes are proposed to be made the Council would need to publish a notice setting out the proposed changes in at least one local newspaper which will explain that readers will have at least fourteen days from the date of the first publication of the notice to object to the change. Notices would also be displayed at the Council Offices and will be placed on the Public Protection Partnership and Council's website and information will be emailed to the Trade.

The remainder of the process is dependent on whether any objections are received (and not withdrawn). The Trade will be updated on the process following the March Executive meeting.