
Hackney Carriage Tariffs 2023 - Update

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	10 July 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lee Dillon
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	08 June 2023
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4298

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To feedback on the statutory consultation in relation to the hackney carriage table of fares and to note any decisions taken by the Executive on the matter.

2 Recommendations

The Licensing Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the outcome of the statutory consultation to increase the table of fares by circa 8.5 % undertaken between the 11 May and 25 May 2023.
- 2.2 **NOTE** that as objections to the varied table of fares were received and not withdrawn the Executive determined the matter at the 08 June 2023 meeting where they agreed to approve the revised table of fares without modification.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>The cost of placing the public notices was around £950 which was met from within existing budgets. There are no other specific financial implications arising from this report.</p> <p>There is a potential for licensing income to reduce should the decision made have a detrimental impact on the number of drivers and operators working in the district. This will be monitored and managed through the Joint Management Board.</p>

<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>There are no HR implications associated with the production of this report.</p> <p>Any actions will be met from within existing resources.</p>			
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>The procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements are stipulated within Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.</p> <p>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/varied table to be made. The remainder of the process is dependent on whether any objections are received (and not withdrawn) or not.</p> <p>There is no right of appeal so any legal challenge to the decision(s) made in relation to a new/varied table of fares would be by way of judicial review.</p> <p>As objections were received and not withdrawn the Executive was required to determine whether or not any modifications should be made to the table of fares.</p> <p>Beth Varcoe from Legal Services was consulted on this paper.</p>			
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>There would be a risk of challenge to the decision should the statutory process not be followed.</p>			
<p>Property:</p>	<p>There are no property implications associated with this report.</p>			
<p>Policy:</p>	<p>There are no policy implications associated with this report.</p>			
	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>Commentary</p>
<p>Equalities Impact:</p>				

A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		Report is to note only
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		Report is to note only.
Environmental Impact:		x		None
Health Impact:		x		There are no health implications associated with this report.
ICT Impact:		x		There are no ICT implications associated with this report.
Digital Services Impact:		x		The outcome of the consultation was published on both the PPP website and the Council's Engagement Hub.
Council Strategy Priorities:		x		The provision of a viable taxi trade in the district supports a number of the priorities in the Council Strategy, in particular they are associated with supporting businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire.
Core Business:		x		Providing support to the taxi trade forms part of the business as usual for the Public Protection Partnership. Keeping Members informed is also part of the Service's core business.

Data Impact:		x		All data obtained during the consultation will be dealt with in accordance with the PPP - Privacy Notice
Consultation and Engagement:	The procedure for setting fares and public notice requirements are stipulated within section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 A report proposing changes to the tariff table agreed in July 2022 was discussed at [the Licensing Committee meeting on the 23 January 2023](#) prior to a decision being taken at the [Executive on the 23 March 2023](#) where Members agreed to go out to consult on an increase of around 8.5%. The Executive agreed that the consultation would take place from the 11th May to the 25th May 2023. The net effect of the proposed changes would mean the cost of a two mile journey, during tariff 1 operating hours, would increase from £8.00 to £8.60 in a saloon vehicle.
- 4.2 The Executive also agreed that the outcome of the statutory consultation and any subsequent decisions of the Executive would be reported back to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee i.e. this meeting.
- 4.3 The Council received seven objections to the proposed modifications to the table of fares and 14 more general comments from a total of 19 respondents. Four of the objections received, all from residents, related to the proposed increase in the fares. These objectors commented that, while they acknowledged the cost of living issues being experienced by the trade, as the price of fuel was now reducing they did not feel that the proposed increases could be substantiated.
- 4.4 One objector (a Private Hire Driver) felt that the increase was not high enough based on the fact that it was an 8.5% proposed increase when inflation was running at closer to 10%.
- 4.5 Two objections (one from an operator and one from a driver) were received stating that the fouling charges proposed were too low. They commented that depending on the time of day that the incident occurred it might not be possible to have the car cleaned. This would mean that it would have to be off the road for some time or the driver would have to hire another vehicle. They felt that the charge should take potential loss of earnings and other costs incurred into account alongside the cost of cleaning the vehicle.
- 4.6 Eleven comments were received supporting the modifications. Of the 19 responses received ten were from residents, two from drivers (did not state if PH or HC), two hackney carriage drivers, two private hire drivers and three operators. Four of the supporters of the increase were residents who were of the opinion that the increases appeared to be fair and reasonable given the increase in fuel charges, the high cost of living and the inevitable increase in other costs faced by the drivers.

- 4.7 The objections and comments are set out in full in Appendix A to the report.
- 4.8 The Executive considered the comments received as well as the objections and determined to approve the revised table of fares without modification. The Executive agreed to a revised implementation date of the 19 June 2023. Officers wrote to the taxi trade and the meter agents to advise them of the Executive decision. This decision means that the fees in West Berkshire were now the same as those in Reading albeit that Reading's fares were last increased in 2022.
- 4.9 They Executive did however comment that they did have some sympathy with the view of the respondents commenting on the fouling charges. One of the issues that they would like to consider going forward would be to align the fouling charges to the three tariffs. This would mean for example during the hours associated with tariff 2 (midnight to 6am and specified holiday periods) when it would be more difficult to have a vehicle cleaned and when the risk of fouling was higher a higher fouling charge could be made. This will be fed into any discussion and consultation on the tariffs in 2024.

5 Other options considered

- 5.1 None. The Executive agreed that a report should be brought to this Committee.

6 Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix A – Outcome of the Statutory Consultation process
- 6.2 Appendix B – Table of Fares of the 19 June 2023.

Background Papers:

Report and Minutes to the Licensing Committee on the 23 January 2023

Report and Minutes to the Executive on the 23 March 2023

Report and Minutes to the Executive on the 08 June 2023

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: All

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