

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

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 was agreed in 2013 and adjustments have been discussed at a number of meetings of the Taxi Trade Liaison Group as well as at Licensing Committee meetings over the past few years.

As a result of these ongoing discussions a report was taken to the [Licensing Committee on the 21 June 2021](#) where it was agreed that, as it had been difficult to get consensus from the trade, an initial non-statutory consultation should be undertaken with them to establish a preferred option. The preferred option would then be subjected to the statutory consultation process.

The Trade were asked to respond to three questions:

1. How many tariffs do you think are required?
2. What timescales do you think should be applied to Tariffs 1 and 2?
3. Which of the two fare options do you think should be included in the statutory consultation?

Background to Question 1

The current scheme comprises three tariffs

Tariff 1	Which is applied between 06:00 and 22:00 Monday to Saturday (excludes bank holidays and public holidays, Boxing Day and Christmas Day)
Tariff 2	Which is applied between 22:00 and 06:00 Monday to Saturday, on Sundays, bank holidays and public holidays, between 06:00 and midnight on Boxing Day, between 19:00 and midnight on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and for any journey with five or more passengers between 06:00 and 22:00 Monday to Saturday
Tariff 3	Which is applied to journeys commencing on Christmas Day until 06:00 on Boxing Day and journeys commencing between midnight and 06:00 on New Year's Day.

It has been suggested by some members of the trade that Tariff 3 might no longer be needed and should therefore be removed from the table of fares.

Background to Question 2

Another issue that has been raised is whether the unsociable hour's element of the tariffs should remain at 22:00 or if that should be changed to 23:00 i.e. Tariff 1 should be applied between 06:00 and 23:00 and Tariff 2 between 23:00 and 06:00. The consultation therefore asked the trade if the unsociable hour's element of the fares should remain at 22:00 or if it should start at 23:00

Background to Question 3

It had been agreed at the Taxi Trade Liaison Group meetings that it would be useful to apply a more logical approach to the tariff setting based on tenths of a mile of this was workable. The options the trade were consulted on comprised a flag charge (which included two units), the units cost broken down into tenths of a mile and waiting times were factored in too. Tariffs 2 and 3 (if needed) would be set as a factor of Tariff 1.

Two options were consulted on. The first was an increase of circa 5% and the second of circa 10%. The option not to increase the fees was not offered as an option. A number of respondents did not select an option but instead commented that they did not want to see the fees increased.

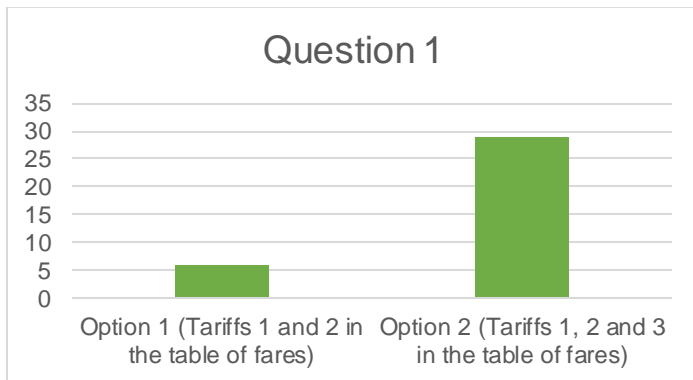
Who we Consulted

- A link to the online consultation survey was sent to all members of the West Berkshire Taxi Trade via email. The consultation was open for comments from members of the West Berkshire Taxi Trade from the 28 June 2021 to the 26 July 2022.
- In addition a meeting was held with a representative from the taximeter providers to ascertain if the options set out in question 3 could be accommodated on the meters.

What you Told Us

The Council received 34 responses to the online survey and an additional response was sent directly to the team via email.

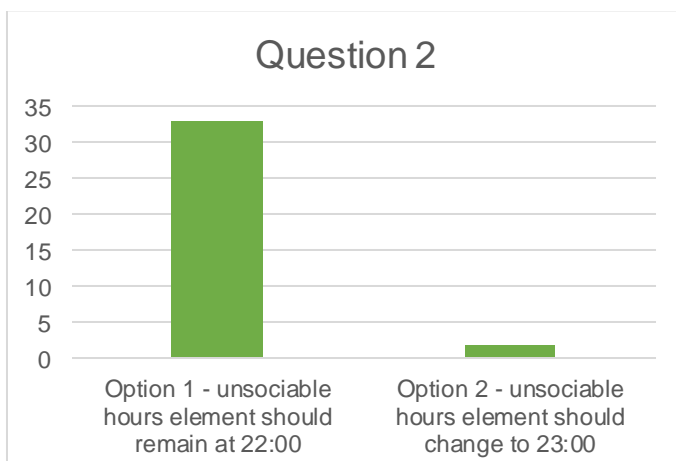
Question 1 - How many tariffs do you think are required?



Summary of Comments Received

We still need an effective charge for Christmas day and New Year's day. Just giving them a price isn't going to be enough
Tariff 3 shouldn't be removed as it only applies on New Year's Eve , Christmas Day, I believe drivers working on those days should earn some extra because drivers working on those festive rather than spend time with family. West Berkshire taxi users always appreciate that they are getting service on festive days
Tariff 3 is for exceptionally anti-social hours. It's a fair reward for working Christmas day / Boxing day and New Year's Eve. Without it customers will suffer. Especially on New Year's Eve. There will be less taxis out working on this night of extreme demand.
All three tariffs
Why should we not have extra to work Christmas day? Take T3 away there is no incentive to work Christmas day or New Year's Eve, it would be like working a normal Sat/Sun. Any other job you get extra to work these shifts.

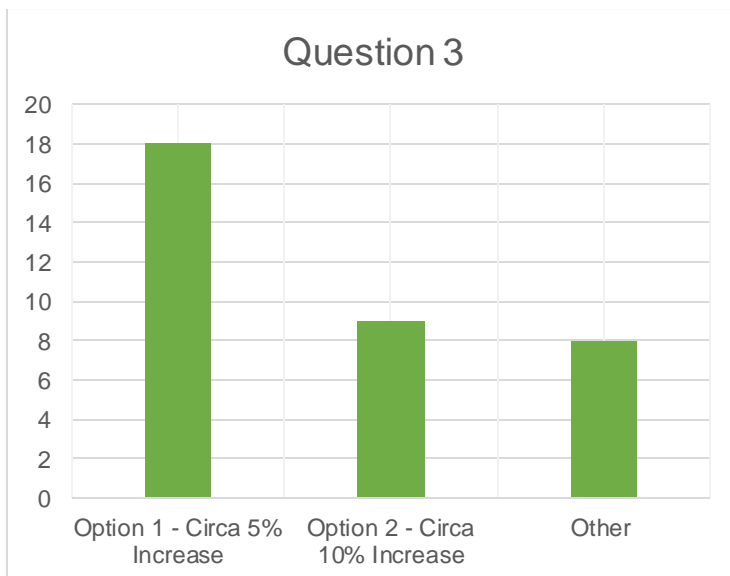
Question 2 - What timescales do you think should be applied to Tariffs 1 and 2?



Summary of the comments received

Unsociable hour's element of Tariffs to remain as is. The extension to 23.00 would have the effect of reducing any fare increase negotiated by the trade.
Keep it as it is now a lot of drivers work very hard
These times are madness. We need to look at tariffs when it's busy like trains and Uber do not do tariffs from years ago that are designed around the dark ages of pubs closing at 11pm. The entire thing needs upgrading to suit today's worlds. Why does a driver in a multi seater dealing with 8 drunk people get paid the same as someone in a normal car after 10pm again makes no sense move double the people for same money
I think this option works well
I personally would like to see the time change to 00.00 Midnight and Sundays as Tariff 1 and Tariff 2 at the agreed change over time to be agreed
Last time this was changed the whole of the trade went on strike to get it back to 22.00, why change something that works ok.

Question 3 - Which of the two fare options do you think should be included in the statutory consultation?



Summary of the comments received

Keep the tariffs at the same rates. Given the year that's been had if there was an increase in price we would lose custom
I wouldn't make any changes to current tariffs at this time! Let the nation heal and get back to work after a pandemic!!

Please note that this response (Option 2) is fully supported by all 71 drivers currently working on the Cabco circuit. A list of these drivers can be provided if required. Cabco is the main provider of taxis in West Berkshire. We have owned office premises (mortgage applicable), permanent staff, pensions liability and all other ancillary costs associated with running a business of this nature. Unlike other businesses we cannot pass on any increased business costs to our customers due to the nature of the tariff system. These can often be substantial and have included;

- Minimum Wage Increase
- Staff Pension Contributions
- Cost of Credit Card Machines/Charges
- Bounce Back Loan repayment, without which we would not still be operating as WBC did not believe we were deserving of any support.

The Independent and smaller operators do not have these concerns and should bear in mind that any increases are the maximum amount chargeable and they can charge less if they so wish. -We have not had any increase since April 2013.

Keep the fares at the same rates so we don't lose customers

Neither it's a crazy idea! Whoever come up with these tariffs has no real idea about the taxi trade in my opinion they are so out of date now. I would also like to raise a point at this moment on electric cars at this point I haven't seen very many wheel access vehicles in this range of electric cars? If West Berks and looking for a greener future can someone explain to me what electric car I can go and purchase and plate as a taxi as with where access the options are very limited. I believe this needs looking at ASAP.

Personally I'm happy to leave it at option 1

Since 2013 through 2020 compounded inflation rose 17.2%. If we add another 2% (it's going to be more) for 2021 that gives up 17.54%. So even with Option 2 the trade is 7.54% worse off than in 2013. Why no 17% option because that's what we are down by?

Neither I had sent what would work within the taximeter, I believe there is so much more to discuss to ensure all are satisfied. Clock Calendar Meters, Multi Seat Vehicle Rates, dates and times

T3 should start at £6.00. That way you have a proper- time, time and a half, and double time. Like we used to have and worked well.

Meeting with the Taximeter Representative

It was noted that increases needed to be considered in terms of the limitations of what could be accommodated on the meters. At least two of the makes of meters currently used in the district could only support units in round numbers (multiples of 10p). It would therefore be preferable to adjust the distances and keep the currency where they are.

The proposal put forward was as follows

- T1 £3.00 initial distance (flag) / initial 69.1 seconds/ 352 yards
£0.20 per unit / 146.7 yards
- T2 £4.50 initial distance (flag) / initial 69.1 seconds/ 352 yards
£0.30 per unit/ 146.7 yards
- T3 £6.00 initial distance (flag) / initial / f 69.1 seconds/ 352 yards
£0.40 per unit / 146.7 yards

Cross over speed of 9.34mph

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.

The outcome of this initial consultation will be taken to a Special Licensing Committee meeting on the 06 September 2021 where Members will be asked to discuss any potential adjustments to the table of fares. If they are minded to make any changes they will need to agree which of the options they will propose that the Head of Public Protection should include in a statutory consultation. The Head of Public Protection will then make a decision 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 to be made the Council will publish a notice setting out the proposed changes in local newspapers (Newbury Weekly News and Reading Chronicle) 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 will also be displayed at the Council Offices and will be placed on the Council's website and information will be emailed to the Trade.

If no objection to the variation is received within the consultation period or if all objections are withdrawn, the revised fares will come into operation on the date of the expiration of the consultation period specified in the notice or the date of withdrawal of the last objection whichever date is the later.

If objections are received the matter will be discussed by Members at the 08 November 2021 Licensing Committee meeting and a final decision will then be made on how to proceed in accordance with any stipulations set out in the Council's Constitution and

in the legal framework. A further date would need to be set to determine when the new table of fares, with or without modifications following consideration of the objections, would come into force. This date is required to be no later than 2 months after the consultation period.