

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Planning and Development	Licensing and Public Safety Committee	Tuesday, 8 March 2022

Consultation Feedback - Request for Taxi Tariff Increase (Hackney carriages)

Is this report confidential?	No
Is this decision key?	Not Applicable

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide feedback with regards to the written request received from members of the taxi trade to increases in the taxi tariff set by this authority.

Recommendations

2. Note the content of the report
3. Consider the consultation responses.
4. Members are asked to take into account the objections received within the report from the consultation exercise. Members are asked to make a decision to accept, reject or modify the proposed changes to the Tariff of Fares set by this licensing authority in line with s65 (4) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

Other options considered and rejected

5. All possible options are proposed to members, are contained within the report.

Corporate priorities

6. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

7. At the last meeting of the Licensing and Public Safety Committee, on 5th January 2022, a report was presented to members of the committee advising that a written request has been received from the “South Ribble Taxi Drivers Association”, for an increase in the tariff of charges set by this authority.
8. Members were asked to consider the proposed request for an increase in the taxi tariff set by the licensing authority and to agree the licensing section undertaking a consultation exercise with stakeholders. The request can be found attached to this report as background document 2.
9. Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 permits Licensing Authorities to set the fares tariff for its licensed Hackney carriages (taxis).
 - The total cost of using a taxi is referred to as a ‘fare’ and is calculated on an electronic meter installed and displayed within the vehicle.
 - The council sets the maximum fares that taxi drivers can charge its passengers.
 - The charge is broken down into a start fee and the distance i.e. the further you go, the higher the fare.
 - There are extra charges for delays/waiting times and multiple number of passengers
 - There are different tariffs for later hours and public and bank holidays

Requested increases

10. The following have 4 increase have been requested by the taxi trade;
11. Increase on start-up fee only by 50p. (charge per mile to stay the same)
 - Tariff 1 - £2.20 to 2:70** - 6.00am and 00.00
 - Tariff 2 - £3.00 to £3.50** - 00.00 to 6.00am, Stat Holidays and Bank Holidays, 5 or more passengers on Tariff 1 rates
 - Tariff 3 - £4.00 to £4.50** - 6.00pm Christmas Eve and 6.00am 27th December and between 6.00pm New Year’s Eve and 6.00am 2nd January or 5 or more passengers on Tariff 2 rates
12. Soiling charge is currently £40.00 increase to £100.00 maximum.
13. Waiting time increase from 10p every 30 seconds to 10p every 20 seconds
14. The additional charge for carrying dogs (excluding assistance dogs), Increase from 60p per dog to £1.00.

Factors to consider as reasoning to increase the tariffs.

15. At the meeting on 05th Jan 2022, several members of the trade addressed the committee and explained the reasons behind requesting an increase of fares.

16. Various factors have been mentioned by the trade as to why they feel now is a reasonable time to increase the tariffs set by this authority;
- Cost of living has increased since 2015 when the last tariff increase took place.
 - Cost of Taxi Plates and Badges have increased since 2015.
 - Cost of recent fuel increase have hit drivers profits on each job they take.
 - Second hand vehicle cost increases - the vehicle age policy requires vehicles to be changed when a certain age is reached, owner drivers must outlay for new vehicles which fit the requirements of the policy.
 - Covid lockdown impact on drivers - lack of work, less people using taxis because of covid.
 - Lack of grants available for licensed drivers - most drivers did not meet the minimum required threshold for grants from the council.
 - Minimum wage increases
17. A member of the trade advised that several drivers had left the profession to work for food delivery services as they were paid better.
18. Following a question from a member of the committee regarding the level of increase requested for the soiling charge, the same member of the trade explained that they requested the soiling charge to be raised to £100 to take into consideration the time they are kept off the road and not just the cleaning bill.
19. If a vehicle was soiled in an evening the driver would have to stop work and return home and wait until morning till the vehicle could be cleaned.
20. The £100 was a figure which had been considered carefully and drivers had tried to keep the increase to a minimum. Obviously, this charge would be a maximum and drivers could charge less if the circumstances required.
21. The committee considered the evidence submitted within the report and agreed that the licensing section undertake a period of consultation, with the relevant stakeholders in respect of the proposed options.
22. Following the committee approval to consult stakeholders, a six-week consultation was conducted up to the 17/02/2022. The consultation highlighted the requested increase by the trade and invited feedback from stakeholders.

Taxi Trade Forum - Wednesday, 12 January 2022

23. At the taxi trade forum, members of the trade were updated on the proposal increase to the taxi tariff that had been received from the trade.
24. some members of the trade and representatives in attendance at the forum, felt that maybe the proposed increase was not high enough, given that an increase had not been given since 2015.

25. Drivers had struggled with loss of trade during COVID and had seen their earnings decrease significantly. The Chair and officers encouraged the trade to meet collectively to complete the consultation advising what increase in fare they thought to be appropriate
26. A second trade forum was proposed to help the trade collectively give the committee feedback to help with their decision and give them a clear sight of what the trade collectively were asking for.

Taxi Trade Forum – Tuesday 25th January 2022

27. At the second forum the trade explained the had collectively discussed if they thought the proposal was actually what they wanted. A representative of the trade explained they agreed with the original proposal.
28. The trade believe the general public is also going through financial hard times and further increases to the one originally proposed would not be fair on their customers and would not look good on the taxi trade within the borough.

Consultation Responses

29. As per the requirements under section 65 (2) of the of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, a public notice was placed within the Lancashire Evening Post within the specific time requirements, a notice was displayed on the council’s reception area, also a notice and a copy of the consultation document placed on the councils website, displaying the proposed changes to the taxi tariffs and where to contact to make representations.
30. No objections were received from any member of the public.
31. Additionally, paper consultation forms were provided to every licensed driver, vehicle proprietor and licensed operator. The summarised consultation responses are as follows;

Proposed Option to increase	
Yes	No
57	3

Proposal

32. The results of the consultation is resoundingly in support of the increase with only 3 members of the trade out of 60 responses not supporting the increase.
33. Officers propose that taking into account the factors mentioned in part 16 to 23 of the report, to agree to the proposal made by the trade representatives to the committee at the meeting of the 05/01/2022.
34. Members are now asked to make a decision to accept, reject or modify the proposed changes to the Tariff of Fares set by this licensing authority in line with s65 (4) of the act which states that;

“the district council shall set a further date, not later than two months after the first specified date, on which the table of fares shall come into force with or without modifications as decided by them after consideration of the objections.”

Climate change and air quality

35. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

36. Equality issues have been raised within the report, the trade have commented about the amount they have asked for in the increase has taken into account that members of the public have been hit hard by covid restrictions financially, this can be found within section 28 of this report.

Risk

37. This has been addressed in the body of the report.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

38. As these charges are not directly made by the Council there are no financial implications for the Council itself in this change.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

39. The power of the Council to set hackney carriage fares and the procedure to be followed both contained in Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 is addressed within the body of the report.

Background documents

Background document 1 can be found within the following link as agenda Item 12 - <https://southribble.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=483&MId=2461&Ver=4>

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Chris Ward (Licensing Manager)	christopher.ward@southribble.gov.uk	01772 625330	22/02/2022