

General Licensing Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	15 th February 2022
Report Title	Review of Taxi Tariff
Cabinet Member	Cllr Richard Palmer, Cabinet Member for Communities
SMT Lead	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Community Services
Head of Service	
Lead Officer	Christina Hills, Licensing Officer
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Members determine whether they wish officers to proceed with the process to amend the current maximum scale of fares for licensed hackney carriages operating within the borough (taxi tariff) 2. If Members determine that the taxi tariff is to be amended, that they authorise officers to consult with the taxi trade and that officers return to a future meeting of the General Licensing Committee so that Members can consider the results of the consultation and approve a tariff of their choice.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This reports requests Members to consider whether they wish to instruct officers to proceed with the process of proposing amendments to the taxi tariff, in line with a recommendation made by General Licensing Committee at its meeting of 21st January 2021 for the taxi tariff to be reviewed in 2022.

2 Background

- 2.1 It is at the discretion of the Council as licensing authority to set a meter tariff for licensed hackney carriages if it chooses to do so.
- 2.2 Councils are not obliged to set a maximum fare for their area, they could decide instead to rely on market forces to establish the going rate and at the same time promote competition.
- 2.3 In the past Swale BC has chosen to set a tariff which represents the maximum fee that can be charged. The current tariff became effective on 11th August 2018 and is attached as **Appendix I**.

- 2.4 At a meeting of the General Licensing Committee on 12th July 2018 when the latest taxi tariff was approved, there was a commitment that Members would review the timescale for future taxi tariff reviews every two years.
- 2.5 The question of amending the taxi tariff was considered at a meeting of the General Licensing Committee of 21st January 2021 where Members decided the following:
- “That the process of amending the current maximum scale of fees for licensed hackney carriages operating within the Borough not be proceeded, but looked at again in 2022.”
- 2.6 The setting of fares applies only to hackney carriages and not to private hire drivers who can charge their own rates as statute allows.
- 2.7 Any driver has the option of charging less than any tariff that is set, as the tariff is the maximum that can be charged but is not obligatory.
- 2.8 Private Hire and Taxi magazine, a monthly magazine for the trade and licensing authorities, regularly publishes a ‘league table’ of tariffs set by licensing authorities (including Transport for London in relation to “Black Cabs”) from the highest to lowest based on the cost of a 2 mile journey. To assist Members the latest figures published on December 2021 relating to all Kent authorities is attached as **Appendix II**.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 If Members decide that the current taxi tariff is to be amended, officers will set about the process of revising the fares taking into account the legal requirements in setting a taxi tariff, undertake a consultation with the taxi trade and present the results of the consultation to a future meeting of the General Licensing Committee for their consideration.
- 3.2 The current tariff card is considered unclear so any future tariff will be in a format similar to that shown at **Appendix III**.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 Members could decide that the current taxi tariff is fair and reasonable and to leave it as it is.
- 4.2 Members could decide that the current taxi tariff should be amended after consultation with the taxi trade.
- 4.3 Members could decide not to set a taxi tariff at all and let hackney carriage drivers set their own fares.

5 Consultation Proposed

- 5.1 If Members decide that the taxi tariff should be amended it is proposed that a full consultation exercise will be conducted with the taxi trade via a link to Survey Monkey as well as mail shots to those that do not have internet access
- 5.2 It is proposed that drivers and operators will be asked the following questions
- a) Do you think that the taxi tariff should be increased at this time:
 - o Yes
 - o No
 - b) If you think that the taxi tariff should be increased at this time, what level of increase do you think would be appropriate:
- 5.3. Officers will calculate several options for drivers to decide between so that the trade can consider what they think is fair and reasonable.
- 5.4 It has been noticed that the current tariff does not include a 50% extra charge for Sundays and also that the rate at which the fare increases is calculated in 10p increments rather than 20p increments. Both of these options are used by the vast majority of local authorities in the country, so it is proposed that these options are also included in the consultation.
- 5.5 The results from any consultation will be brought back to a future meeting of the General Licensing Committee for consideration.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	There are obvious links to community safety in ensuring an adequate supply of properly licensed taxis as a safe mode of transport for the public, particularly when other public transport is unavailable. If taxi fares are set too high, then members of the public are less likely to use them. This therefore has indirect links to: Priority 3: Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone

	<p>3.4 Ensure that the council plays a proactive role in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, including through the modernisation of CCTV provision.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Should Members decide that the taxi tariff should be amended there would be the need for public consultation on the proposals which would be met from within existing licensing budgets.</p> <p>The cost of re-calibrating individual meters would be met by licensed drivers and operators.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The authority for the Council to fix fares for hackney carriages is given under Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. When a Council makes or varies a table of fares (Which may be by time and/or distance) it must publish in one local newspaper a notice setting out the table of fares, or variations to the table, specifying the period (not less than 14 days) within which objections to the table or variations can be made.</p> <p>A copy of the proposed tariff must be available at the Council's offices for the public to inspect, free of charge, at all reasonable hours.</p> <p>If there are no objections the amended fares come in to effect as specified in the Notice.</p> <p>If there are objections the Council must set a further date, within two months after the first date specified, on which the table is to come into force with or without modification, as decided. Any such modification would be dealt with by the Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities and the Chair of the General Licensing Committee.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>There are obvious links to community safety in ensuring an adequate supply of properly licensed taxis as a safe mode of transport for the public, particularly when other public transport is unavailable.</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>None identified</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>None identified</p>
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>The provision of adequate, affordable taxi journeys is necessary to ensure the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults</p>

Risk Management and Health and Safety	An unreasonable increase in the level of fares could be a source of resentment amongst the travelling public. Equally an unreasonably low increase or no increase could be a source of resentment amongst the trade. The current Coronavirus pandemic and the increase in fuel costs could enhance these feelings.
Equality and Diversity	An increase in taxi fares could negatively impact on low income individuals and families, however taxi drivers themselves may be disadvantaged if the tariff is not increased as they too could be on low incomes.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Current Swale taxi tariff
- Appendix II: Benchmarking of taxi tariffs within Kent

8 Background Papers

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.