

<b>Extraordinary Licensing Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2025
<b>Report Title</b>	Review of Taxi Tariff
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Johanna Thomas, Licensing Team Leader
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Members determine whether to modify the current maximum scale of fares for licensed hackney carriages operating within the borough (taxi tariff) taking into consideration comments received during the statutory consultation.</li> <li>2. That Members determine whether to amend the agreement to automatically annually increase the taxi tariff based upon the National Rail fares increase.</li> </ol>

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This reports requests Members to consider objections made during the statutory consultation for the proposed variation to the maximum fares to be charged for Hackney Carriages and decide whether to make any modifications to the existing taxi tariff. Should Members decide modifications are necessary, Members are asked to determine what those modifications should be.
- 1.2 This reports requests Members to consider whether in light of relevant objections to the proposed taxi tariff the agreement to automatically annually increase the tariff based upon National Rail fares should be modified.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 It is at the discretion of the Council as licensing authority to set a meter tariff for licensed hackney carriages.
- 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.

- 2.4 The setting of fares applies only to hackney carriages and not to private hire drivers who can charge their own rates as statute allows.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 At a meeting of the General Licensing Committee on 4th October 2022 It was agreed that there should be an automatic annual increase to the taxi tariff and that the increase should be based upon the National Rail fares, subject to a statutory consultation.
- 2.7 Following the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2022 Licensing Committee the tariff was increased effective of 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The current tariff increased in line with the 2024 national Rail increase became effective on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and is attached as **Appendix I**.
- 2.8 In addition to fares the taxi tariff sets out the maximum amount a driver can charge a passenger if they soil the vehicle to the point where it has to be removed from service and cleansed. At a meeting of the General Licensing Committee on 11th February 2025 It was agreed that the soilage charge should be increased from £50 to £100.
- 2.9 On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2025 National Rail fares increased across the country by 4.6%. In accordance with the agreement to increase the maximum scale of fares for licensed hackney carriages operating within the borough inline with the annual rail fare increase a variation to the current tariff was prepared and pursuant to Section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 advertised in the local newspapers, at the council offices and by newsletter to the trade. Advertisement showing proposed tariff is attached as **Appendix II**.
- 2.10 The current fare is £8.30 for a 2 mile journey, the proposed fare is an increase to £8.70 for the same distance.
- 2.11 During the consultation period Licensing Officers received no comments from members of the public, comments from the taxi trade. In accordance with Section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, objections must be considered by a meeting of the Licensing Committee. The objections can be seen as **Appendix III**. Included in the table are responses from the trade received after the end of the consultation in reaction to a newsletter sent out to drivers and operators informing them that objections had been received and that a meeting of the Licensing Committee would be arranged to decide whether the proposed increase would go ahead, whether the proposal would be amended, or whether the increase would not go ahead this year.
- 2.12 To assist Members information on current fares for national and local Kent authorities is provided as **Appendix IV**  
This information has been compiled from the latest figures published by Private Hire and Taxi Monthly (PHTM) on their webpage. PHTM provide a monthly

magazine and website for the trade and licensing authorities, that regularly publishes a 'league table' of tariffs set by licensing authorities showing the highest to lowest based on the cost of a 2 mile journey.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 Members are asked to decide whether to modify the Swale taxi tariff as proposed. The proposed tariff card is attached as **Appendix V**.
- 3.2 Members are asked to decide whether the increase to the Swale taxi tariff should continue to be increased annually inline with national rail increases

### 4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 If Members do not agree with the proposed increase they could decide:
  - a. that the current taxi tariff is fair and reasonable and to leave the fares as they are and only increase the soilage charge.
  - b. That the tariff should be increased by a different amount than that proposed.
- 4.2 Members may consider whether the increase should continue to be applied annually based on national rail fares, or whether:
  - a. Fares should be increased biannually based on the national rail increase that year, subject to the required consultation in accordance with Section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
  - b. Fares should be increased annually based on national rail increases only if agreed by a simple survey sent out to the trade in January asking whether they want an increase that year. If the trade vote for an increase to fares the statutory consultation will be carried out in accordance with Section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>The service is an important regulatory function undertaken to ensure the safety of the travelling public of Swale as well as its licensed drivers.</p> <p>There are links to:</p> <p>Community - To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.</p>

	<p>Economy - Working with our businesses and community organisations to work towards a sustainable economy which delivers for local people.</p> <p>Environment - To provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.</p> <p>Running the Council - Working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver in a transparent and efficient way.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	The cost of re-calibrating individual meters would be met by licensed drivers and operators.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Changes to the table of fares published by the Authority must be made in accordance with the procedure set out in s.65 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. That sets out the notification requirements and the process if unresolved representations are made to any proposed changes.
Crime and Disorder	The licensing role of the Council is important in improving the safety, security and welfare of the Borough's residents, visitors and business community by ensuring an adequate supply of properly licensed taxis as a safe mode of transport for the public, particularly when other public transport is unavailable and ensuring the safety of drivers.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified
Health and Wellbeing	None identified
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>Licensing regimes are largely designed to protect public safety. The DfT Statutory Standards and The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022 go even further to protect public safety, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults and these have been incorporated into this policy revision.</p> <p>Air quality is also an important aspect of protecting children and vulnerable adults and therefore imperative that the licensing of vehicles contributes to improving the air quality in the borough.</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The provision of adequate, affordable taxi journeys is necessary to ensure the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults
Equality and Diversity	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.

Privacy and Data Protection	None identified
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## 7 Appendices

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

- Appendix I – Current Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Fare Table – date of commencement 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- Appendix II – Advertisement in accordance with Section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Appendix III – Consultation table of responses
- Appendix VI – Comparison of National and Local Council Taxi Fares compiled from [Hackney Taxi Fare Tables](#) published by Private Hire and Taxi Monthly
- Appendix V – Proposed Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Fare Table

## 8 Background Papers

All relevant legislation as outlined at paragraph 1.1.2 of the draft Swale BC Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy, most particularly The Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

The Minutes of the Licensing Committee Meeting held on 4th of October 2022  
[Agenda Template](#)

The Minutes of the Licensing Committee Meeting held on 11th February 2025  
[Minutes Template](#)