

General Licensing Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	19 th April 2018
Report Title	Review of the Taxi Tariff
Cabinet Member	Cllr Alan Horton, Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities
SMT Lead	Mark Radford
Head of Service	Mark Radford
Lead Officer	Della Fackrell, Resilience & Licensing Manager
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 the Taxi tariff is to be amended that officers return to a future meeting of the General Licensing Committee so that Members can approve the proposals prior to formal consultation

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 after taking into account responses received from an initial public consultation exercise into whether there was any support for a change to tax fares.

2 Background

- 2.1 It is at the discretion of the Council as licensing authority to set a meter tariff for licensed hackney carriages operating within the borough 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 6th October 2013 and is attached **Appendix I**.

- 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 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 December 2017 figures relating to all Kent authorities is attached as **Appendix II**.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Following consultation with the public there is a need to determine what changes, if any, should be made to the existing taxi tariff
- 3.2 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

4. 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..
- 4.3 Members could decide not to set a taxi tariff at all and let hackney drivers set their own fares.

5 Consultation Undertaken

- 5.1 A consultation exercise of 4 weeks ran between 7th March – 6th April 2018.
- 5.2 The consultation asked two questions:
 - Should taxi fares change?
 - What are your suggestions?
- 5.3 Methods of consultation included advertising on the council's website, by way of direct emails to drivers and operators, and where this was not possible, postal mailshots as well as advertising in the local newspaper. A taxi newsletter was also sent to the 460 licensed drivers of the borough and 50 licensed operators of the borough informing them of the consultation

- 5.4 As a result of the consultation 1 response was received from a member of the public who was against any increase to the taxi tariff. The comments are attached as **Appendix III**.
- 5.4 7 responses were received from licensed drivers of which 6 were in support of an increase in the tariff and 1 was against. Their comments are attached as **Appendix IV**.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The service is an important regulatory function undertaken to ensure safety of the private hire and hackney carriage vehicles used in the Borough and supports the achievement of corporate priorities, including “A council to be proud of”..
Financial, Resource and Property	The cost of consultation will be met from within existing budgets The cost of re-calibrating individual meters would be met by licensed drivers and operators
Legal and Statutory	<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	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.
Environmental Sustainability	None identified

Health and Wellbeing	None identified
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.
Equality and Diversity	None identified
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
- Appendix III: Comment from a member of the public regarding the taxi tariff
- Appendix IV: Comments from taxi drivers regarding the taxi tariff

8 Background Papers

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976