

Outcome of the Statutory Hackney Carriage Tariffs Consultation

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 issue of setting fares for hackney carriage drivers is an important one for two reasons. The fare set by licensing authority largely determines the ability of drivers to earn a decent living but also aims to ensure that passengers receive a fair deal when taking a journey in a licensed hackney carriage.

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. There has been a mixed picture as to whether or not the trade wished to increase the fares and if so by what amount. The Council therefore undertook a [non-statutory consultation](#) with the trade to establish their views before agreeing to undertake a statutory consultation on a modified table of fares.

Once the comments received during the non-statutory consultation had been collated a report was taken to the [06 September 2021 Licensing Committee](#) where it was agreed that it would be recommended to the Service Director (development and Regulation) that a public statutory consultation on the [proposed changes](#) would be undertaken.

In summary the statutory consultation proposed the following Table of Fares:

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

Who and How we Consulted

- A notice was placed in the Newbury Weekly News and the Reading Chronicle on the 16 September 2021 and on the Public Protection Partnership's website on the same day.
- A copy of the notice was also placed in the Market Place Reception on the 16 September 2021.
- A copy of the notice was emailed individually to all licensed Hackney Carriage Proprietors for their comments.
- The consultation ran from the 16 September 2021 to 14 October 2021.

What you Told Us

We received one objection to the proposed modification which is set out in the table below:

I would like to formally object to the proposed increases to hackney carriage rates for the following reasons:

- With the pandemic ongoing at present and the risks of a subsequent influenza pandemic on the horizon, now is the wrong time to be considered a rise. Each and every rise sees a fall in the number of passengers.
- The UK economy and the local economy is already fairly frail.
- Locally Bayer pulled out of town and with Vodafone also relocating a lot of staff to Paddington, the local trade is suffering.
- Therefore the loss of any passengers due rate increases will be detrimental to the trade.
- I would also add that this pandemic has affected us all, however the majority of the trade has been well looked after by central and local government with the provisions of loans and grants, therefore, I feel that this is another reason why it would be inappropriate for the trade to be requesting more money from the general public.
- Lastly, whilst I accept we haven't had a rise since 2013, I would ask that you consider deferring a decision for 12 months or until we as a country know what is happening surrounding the pandemics.

What We Are Proposing To Do

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 section 65 gives a Local Authority the power to determine the table of fares for the hire of hackney carriages. This legislation also prescribes the statutory consultation process that must be followed and the procedures for ensuring that objections are properly considered in relation to a Local Authority's adoption of or variation to a table of fares before the table comes into effect.

As an objection to the varied table of fares has been received (see table above) and not withdrawn the matter must be considered further to decide whether or not to modify the table of fares before it comes into effect. A further date for the table to come into effect must also be set. The objections will therefore be discussed by Members of the Licensing Committee at a meeting on the 08 November 2021 and they will be asked to make recommendations to the Executive who will make the final determination on this matter. This item is scheduled to be discussed at the Executive meeting on the 18 November 2021.

The table of fares must come into operation by the 14 December 2021 i.e. no later than two months after the last date for making objections (14 October 2021) with or without modification. Officers will be recommending to the Executive that they set an

implementation date of the 02 December 2021. This should allow for sufficient time for meters to be recalibrated if a decision is made to vary the fares. It will be up to individuals or companies to decide whether or not they wish to charge the maximum fares or not.