

Review into West Suffolk Council's Hackney Carriage Fares Consultation for 2024

Report No:	LIC/WS/24/002
Report to and date/s:	Licensing & Regulatory Committee - 15 April 2024
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Decisions Plan: N/A

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- 1. Members consider the report and the consultation response received (Appendix A); and**
- 2. Members commit to adopting the taxi fares table without modification and set a date for them to come into effect.**



1. Introduction

1.1 During the Licensing and Regulatory Committee meeting on 29 January 2024 it was resolved that

1. The revised table of fares for West Suffolk, as tabled to the meeting, were approved;
2. Taxi fares were to be annually reviewed by the Licensing & Regulatory Committee at the meeting scheduled closest to 1 March;
3. The proposed methodology for how an annual fare review will be undertaken, as set out in Report No LIC/WS/24/001, was approved; and
4. A temporary surcharge of £1 per journey was approved in the event that petrol and/or diesel prices increase to £2 per litre.

1.2 During the meeting it was highlighted that any change to the fares agreed by the Committee would have to undergo a public consultation period and the report which accompanied the proposed fares specified that if approved the Council must advertise the proposed fare increase in a local newspaper

2.0 Background

2.1 Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 makes provision for the Council to fix the rates of fares for time, distance, and all other charges in connection with the hire of a hackney carriage.

2.3 Following the revised table of fares being agreed by the Licensing and Regulatory committee the Licensing Team went out to consultation. A copy of the public notice was displayed in a local paper on 5 February 2024 giving notice that the Council was consulting on the proposed fare increase and that the consultation would run until 20 February 2024 (Appendix B).

2.5 A copy of the notice was displayed at the Council offices and drivers and operators were notified by email of the fact that West Suffolk Council was out for consultation regarding a proposed fare increase.

3.0 Consultation Responses

3.1 Two responses were duly received during the consultation period, which have been included in Appendix A. The responses stated that they didn't agree with an increase at this point in time. No other objections were duly received by the Licensing Team during the consultation period.

3.3 As the objections have not been subsequently withdrawn the Council must consider them and set a new date for the table of fares to come into effect with or without modification.

3.4 In light of the factors raised by the Licensing Team and the taxi trade during the previous Licensing and Regulatory Committee meeting it is recommended that the Committee agrees to accept the table of fares without modification and that a date is set for the fares to come into effect. **It is the Licensing Team's recommendation that this date is set for Monday 22 April 2024.**



5. Implications

5.1 Financial

Any increase in fares would incur a small, one-off cost to all hackney carriage proprietors for a meter recalibration.

Legal

5.2 Where an Authority makes or varies a Table of Fares it must publish in at least one local newspaper a notice setting out the Table or variation, specifying a period not less than 14 days within which objections may be made, and keep a copy of the notice at its offices open to public inspection. If no objection is received or all objections are withdrawn, the Table or variation comes into operation. If an objection is made and not withdrawn, the council must set a further date for the Table or variation to come into effect, with or without modification as decided by it after consideration of the objections.

A Table of Fares has effect as if it were included in the hackney carriage byelaws. Unless the fare is otherwise agreed before the hiring was affected, the Table applies to journeys ending outside the district. It also applies where a hackney carriage is used in the district as a private hire vehicle.

6. Risks

6.1 It is important that fares reflect the running costs associated with operating hackney carriage vehicles. Failing to review the fares could be detrimental to hackney carriage proprietors, particularly where the operating costs make the business financially unviable as it currently stands.

6.2 Increasing the cost of using taxis may also impact those who are partly or wholly reliant on taxis for transport.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix A – Consultation responses received
Appendix B – Copy of the public notice which was displayed in a local paper

