

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Licensing Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Public Protection Business Manager <a href="mailto:licensing@denbighshire.gov.uk">licensing@denbighshire.gov.uk</a> 01824 706066
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Hackney Carriage Vehicles Table of Fares and Charges

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Members on the review the current tariff charges for hackney carriage vehicles (taxis).

## **2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 At the end of 2023, Members considered a report on a proposal to increase the current Hackney Carriage Table of Fares
- 2.2 At the December 2023 Licensing Committee meeting Members resolved to retain the current tariff pending the review and development of a fare calculator.
- 2.3 At the last Licensing Committee meeting officers verbally updated Members of the progress and advised that more data was required to effectively populate the fare calculator to Denbighshire needs.
- 2.4 Officers will update Members on the methodology and tariff and next steps.

## **3.0 POWER TO MAKE THE DECISION**

- 3.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

## **4.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 ("the Act") allows the Council to fix the rates or fares within the County in connection with the hire of a hackney vehicle.
- 4.2 The current tariff has been effective for a number of years and has been subject to an ongoing review since mid-2023.

- 4.3 Following the resolution at the September Licensing Committee officers consulted publically on a proposal to increase the tariff as instructed. Members may recall that consultation responses were mixed and as such Members resolved at their December meeting to retain the current tariff pending development of a fare calculator.
- 4.4 Officers have sought to obtain useable data from current licensed drivers / proprietors to assist in populating a fare calculator. There has been a very small response (less than 10 respondents). Where gaps in data have been identified officers have relied on other data to produce a fare calculator and methodology.
- 4.5 This fare calculator has been produced by Guilford Council and has been replicated, with permission, at a number of local authorities across the country, including Denbighshire. No other north Wales authority uses this method.
- 4.6 Members may wish to note that this calculator was recommended by a licensing consultant in 2021 and has been further supported as good practice by James Button, President of the Institute of Licensing and Chair of the Institute's Taxi Consultative Panel.
- 4.7 The calculator aims to provide the cost of running a taxi with a mid-range vehicle whilst providing an average salary for the proprietor.
- 4.8 Officers have prepared a detailed methodology and procedure on the use of the calculator which is at Appendix 1.
- 4.9 The tariff produced is at Appendix 2 along with a comparison table of North Wales authorities.
- 4.10 It is important to note that the Table of Fares provides the maximum fare that can be charged for a journey. The proprietor can agree a lower fare with the passenger.
- 4.11 It should be further noted that the table of fares only relate to fares wholly within the County of Denbighshire. Where a journey starts or finishes outside of the County an agreed fare can be reached between driver and passenger. This can be more or less than the Councils table of fares. If there is no fare negotiated before the journey starts then the meter must be used and the table of fares would be relevant.

## 5. CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The Council needs to support, as much as is reasonably practicable, the hackney carriage trade and given the rising cost of living, in particular, the cost of fuel (petrol, diesel and electricity), it is not unreasonable for the Council to allow the fares to be increased. A failure to do this reduces the ability of hackney carriage proprietors to effectively run their business in a competitive marketplace, which may then result in a reduction in the overall number of hackney carriages.
- 5.2 Equal consideration should be made for the impact any increase in Hackney Carriage fares may have on the travelling public for the same reasons it has on the Hackney Carriage Proprietors themselves. To offset changes in the marketplace and for Hackney Carriage Proprietors to retain their existing customer base they have the ability to charge up to the maximum amount on the Hackney Carriage Table of Fares. This allows them to negotiate a reasonable price with their regular customers and retain their custom, whilst still enabling them to gain a margin of profit.
- 5.3 Should Members resolve to support an increase in the current fares, Officers propose to go out to public consultation by publishing the required statutory notice for variations on the tariff. This notice must appear in one local newspaper circulated in the County and detail the proposed new tariff. There is a minimum statutory period of 14 days. Members are advised that preparing the associated documents and process for consultation through County Conversation website will take some time to prepare but is anticipated to be live within two months. The notice will specify how and where objections can be made along with a specified date on which the tariff will take effect, if there are no objections.
- 5.4 If no objections are received at this stage the amended table of fares and charges will come into effect after the expiration of the public notice i.e. the date specified. However, should objections be received at this stage, they must be considered by the council for a final tariff and a date of implementation.
- 5.5 Members should note that any final tariff will require a Lead Member Delegated decision to ensure the Council meets its constitutional obligations.
- 5.6 In summary Members are being asked to consider one of the following options:
- Retain the current table of fares;
  - to increase the tariff in line with the tariff calculator, subject to statutory consultation.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 That Members consider the contents of this report and comment as necessary on the methodology documents attached in the appendices.
- 6.2 Authorise officers to proceed with statutory notice with an implementation date of at least 14 days following publication of the notice.
- 6.3 Authorise officers to implement the said table of fares on the date specified in the notice if no objections are received following publication of the notice.
- 6.4 Instruct officers to prepare a report for the Licensing Committee if any objections are received to that statutory notice.