

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

LICENSING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE – 19 January 2023

HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE INCREASE

REPORT OF GREG BICKERDIKE, LICENSING MANAGER, CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL

PART A – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Licensing Committee for a public consultation on an increase in Hackney Carriage fares.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Authorise the required publishing of a notice in a local newspaper detailing the proposed fare increase and stating a consultation period during which objections regarding the increase can be made.
- 2.2 Subject to no objection following consultation, approve the proposed increases in Hackney Carriage fares.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	No	
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	Yes	Elderly people and people with disabilities will be disproportionately and adversely affected by this change. As such, their needs will need to be balanced with hackney carriage drivers.
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	No	
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Summer 2023	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	Yes	The cost of the advertisement in the local newspaper and the production of new fare cards is likely to be in the region of £1,200. These costs will be met from within existing revenue budgets.

		Any charges for meter calibration will be at the Hackney Carriage Vehicle licence holder's own expense.
LEGAL ISSUES	No	<p>Section 65 of Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provides:</p> <p>(1) A district council may fix the rates or fares within the district as well for time as distance, and all other charges in connection with the hire of a vehicle or with the arrangements for the hire of a vehicle, to be paid in respect of the hire of hackney carriages by means of a table (hereafter in this section referred to as a "table of fares") made or varied in accordance with the provisions of this section.</p> <p>(2) (a) When a district council make or vary a table of fares they shall publish in at least one local newspaper circulating in the district a notice setting out the table of fares or the variation thereof and specifying the period, which shall not be less than fourteen days from the date of the first publication of the notice, within which and the manner in which objections to the table of fares or variation can be made.</p> <p>(b) A copy of the notice referred to in paragraph (a) of this subsection shall for the period of fourteen days from the date of the first publication thereof be deposited at the offices of the council which published the notice, and shall at all reasonable hours be open to public inspection without payment.</p> <p>(3) If no objection to a table of fares or variation is duly made within the period specified in the notice referred to in subsection (2) of this section, or if all objections so made are withdrawn, the table of fares or variation shall come into operation on the date of the expiration of the period specified in the notice or the date of withdrawal of the objection or, if more than one, of the last objection, whichever date is the later.</p> <p>(4) If objection is duly made as aforesaid and is not withdrawn, the district council shall set a further date, not later than two months after the first specified date, on which the table of fares shall come into force with or without modifications as decided by them after consideration of the objections.</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	

PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

4.1 BACKGROUND

- 4.2 On 1 April 2022, South Staffordshire District Council (SSDC) delegated its taxi licensing function to City of Wolverhampton Council.
- 4.3 Due to the cost-of-living crisis, the Hackney Carriage trade has requested a fare increase.
- 4.4 South Staffordshire Council's fares have not increased for twelve years, since 2010, with a two-mile journey on tariff one (the industry benchmark) costing £5.10. Every other licensing authority, apart from Pendle, has increased their fees more recently.
- 4.5 Engagement and consultation with the trade has been ongoing, with consideration given to inflation, labour shortages in the taxi industry, future anticipated costs, fares set by other authorities.
- 4.6 The trade has requested price parity with City of Wolverhampton Council's fares (Appendix 1). For the benchmark, this is an increase of 33%. However, Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation over the same period is 57.7%, meaning that if the fare was to increase at that rate it would be £8.04, whereas the proposed increase would be to £6.80. As such, this is a below inflation increase for the trade.
- 4.7 A comparison of the county's other authorities' fares, as well as Wolverhampton's, are below:

National Rank	Council	Typical fare	Increased
110	Tamworth	£7.14	2022
175	Wolverhampton	£6.80	2022
192	Cannock Chase	£6.50	2022
218	Stafford	£6.50	2022
227	East Staffordshire	£6.00	2021
302	Lichfield	£5.80	2020
324	Newcastle-Under-Lyme	£5.55	2019
336	Staffordshire Moorlands	£5.20	2015
338	South Staffordshire Council	£5.10	2010

- 4.8 Under the provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the maximum fares charged by Hackney Carriage services can be set by the Local

Authority in which they are licensed to trade. The Local Authority has no legal power to control the fares charged by Private Hire Vehicles.

- 4.9 There have been no increases to the fares since 2010, however double time over Christmas and New Year was approved following a report to the Non-Statutory Licensing Committee on 10 July 2019.
- 4.10 In accordance with the Act, a notice must be published in a local newspaper, stating the proposed fare increase and provide details of the route for objections. The notice must specify a date, which must not be less than 14 days from the date on which the notice is first published, by which date any objection regarding the fare increase must be made to the Council.
- 4.11 A copy of the notice must be available at the Council offices for inspection, free of charge, at all reasonable hours. Once the consultation period (in this instance 14 days) has expired, if there have been no objections received, or any received have been subsequently withdrawn, then the new fares take effect, either at the end of the consultation period or when the last objection is withdrawn. However, if objections are made and are not withdrawn, then Councillors must consider the objections and a further report will be presented to the Licensing Committee.
- 4.12 All meters will need to be calibrated with the new fares at the proprietors' expense.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Not applicable

PREVIOUS MINUTES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Relevant Legislation

None

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