

Licensing Committee

18 March 2022

Taxi Fares and Fees

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr L Miller, Customer and Community Services

Local Councillor(s): All Cllrs

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary: To determine the maximum level of fares that can be charged by a Hackney Carriage Proprietor and to set the fees for the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licence regimes

Recommendations:

1. To consider the responses from the licensed trade and agree the new fees for the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licences
2. To consider the responses from the licensed trade and to agree the new tariffs for both zones

Reason for Recommendation: To ensure openness and transparency in the Council's decision making, and to ensure that those persons affected by the policy are given the opportunity to have an input into it.

1. Background

- 1.1 The new Dorset Council Taxi Licensing Policy (the Policy) adopted in November 2021 comes into force on 1 April 2022. The Policy will remove the historic zones that have operated in the Dorset Council area, apart from the Weymouth and Portland hackney carriage zone that will remain in place due to the restricted number of vehicles that can operate as hackney

- carriages there, see paragraphs 2.16 – 2.19 of the Policy which is attached in full at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Paragraph 2.25 of the Policy states there will be one maximum tariff for the whole area, apart from the Weymouth and Portland zone, and the first purpose of this report is to agree those tariffs.
 - 1.3 Secondly, a further decision is required to agree one fee for each type of licence for the whole of the district. Historically different fees have been charged across the zones for licences.
 - 1.4 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 sets out in sections 65 and 70 that any changes to fare or fees for Operators Licences and Vehicle Licences need to be advertised. The legislation is attached at Appendix 2.
 - 1.5 The fees and fares have been advertised on 16 February in the Dorset Echo with a correction on 23 February. They have also been advertised in the Bridport News and the Blackmore Vale. Every hackney carriage proprietor has been sent a copy of the fares and every licence holder has been sent a copy of the fees. Whilst only the operators and vehicle fees needed to be advertised, as a matter of good practice all the fees were advertised.
- 2. New Fees**
- 2.1 The fees for all the predecessor zones can be found in Appendix 3 together with the fees from the neighbouring Councils for comparison.
 - 2.2 The fees must be made up of two parts, an “application fee” and a “licence fee” which is the ongoing costs of compliance associated with each licence. This is due to a case brought by Hemmings against the City of Westminster, and in practice means that if licences are refused only the application fee is payable, not the licence fee.
 - 2.3 The proposed fees have been calculated by taking the time required by officers to process an application and the cost of materials per badge or plate. Further costs are calculated to cover the costs of the database, web site maintenance, policy preparation, training and legal advice. The proposed fees and the breakdown of the elements is attached at Appendix 4.
 - 2.4 There have been 13 comments on the fees which are attached in full at Appendix 5. The breakdown of the fees as attached at Appendix 4 has been sent to all of the licence holders who requested it. There are

comments about how licence holders expected the fees to reduce as a result of the unification of the five district Councils with the former County Council, comments about the effects of Covid-19 and the changes to the service over the years, the shortage of drivers, the fact that single vehicle operators pay the same as multi vehicle operators and the expectation that licence fees should reduce.

3. New Fares

- 3.1 The fares in many of the predecessor Council areas have not changed for years. Historically fees and fare changes have usually run hand in hand. The previous Tables of Fares also included at Appendix 6 together with a league table of all fares across the country which is published monthly by the trade magazine "Private Hire Monthly" (with 1 being the most expensive Council), where in March Weymouth were ranked 44th in the Country, East Dorset 73rd, Purbeck 111th, North 189th and West 202nd.
- 3.2 There are two Tables of Fares proposed for Hackney Carriages. One for the Weymouth and Portland zone and one for the rest of the Dorset Council area. The Weymouth Taxi Association requested a specific fare rise for this zone which has been advertised and been sent to all proprietors in the zone.
- 3.3 The maximum fare for the hackney carriages in the whole Dorset Council area is set at the highest "First Mile" and the highest "Subsequent Mile" rates from the predecessor Councils fares. This gives every proprietor the opportunity to have an increase, albeit a modest one for the Purbeck hackney carriage proprietors who have traditionally had the highest fares.
- 3.4 The proposed new tariff cards can be found at Appendix 7.
- 3.5 There have been 12 comments on the fares which can be found in full at Appendix 8. The comments relate to the effects of rising fuel costs, a requirement to fix the fares so everyone charges the same, the low rise for those in the Purbeck zone, support to the rise from the North zone, the times the tariffs change, a suggestion for an alternative rate, a question about why Weymouth is a separate zone, a request to have the additional passenger charge, requests for different times to apply to the tariffs and a request to increase the soiling charge.

4. Financial Implications

The funding for the preparation and consultation of the fees and charges will come from existing budgets. The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing must be self-funding, not be a drain on the taxpayer and not make a profit, these fees will achieve this.

There are no further financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. Climate Implications

There are no negative implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report in terms of meeting the Council's climate change obligations.

6. Well-being and Health Implications

There could be an impact on the health and well being of the public if the hackney carriage fares are set too high, which could make this form of transport inaccessible to some.

7. Other Implications

There are no implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report in terms of impacts on other service areas within the Council.

8. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as: -

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

9. Equalities Impact Assessment

An EqIA was prepared for the Dorset Council Taxi Licensing Policy.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 Dorset Council Taxi Licensing Policy

Appendix 2 Legislation

Appendix 3 Previous Fees and Benchmarking

Appendix 4 Proposed Fees

Appendix 5 Consultation Responses

Appendix 6 Proposed Tariff

Appendix 7 Previous Tariffs

Appendix 8 Consultation Responses

11. Background Papers

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976