

Appendix 5 – Responses to Fees Consultation

1

I would like to request a breakdown of the new fee calculations and the previous breakdown of fee calculations please. I am struggling to understand how certain fees can increase when licensing expenses must have reduced over recent years. When I started taxiing over 10 years ago you could book to see a Licencing Officer 5 days a week, that then went down to 3 days then 2 then 1 and now it has gone to being done through email or over the phone (which is probably more efficient for yourself and ourselves except for trying to pay, which can be an issue sometimes). I also thought one of the ideas of combining the 5 council authority's was again to reduce expenses and the closure of the offices in South Walks Road was to reduce council expenses.

2

Just received the proposals for fees ?

Vehicle renewal gone up by £75.40

Driver badge renewal gone down by £18.00 but it does not say if that is still for 3 years or not, or are you changing that to annually ?

In which that would mean £426.00 for 3 years increase of £266.00 Operators Licence gone up by £76.00

Our tariff proposal £0.40 for 1st mile, and £0.80 per mile after that.

No higher pull off fee, as most local jobs are between £4.00 & £6.00 we are looking at increase between £0.60 to £1.40 per local trip, most distance trips are quoted and not run on the meter.

Understanding that we have not had a fare increase for 10 years and with inflation, fuel prices, insurance, and running costs going up, I don't think this increase is very fair for the drivers.

Your Vehicle renewal price has gone up by 40% Not sure about the drivers badge yet as not sure if it is staying the same ?

Please can you answer the question on the drivers badge ?

And talking to drivers we thought that the increase might have been a bit higher ?

Who actually thought of these new tariff charges, if not a driver why was we not consulted ?

Journeys Taxis

3

I hereby lodge my rejection to the proposed increase in licensing fees.

As we are all aware, for the past two years the country has been in and out of lockdown. Flights abroad have been limited. Approximately 40% of nationwide taxi drivers have given up and are no longer in business due to covid-19. The drivers and taxi companies that have survived, have done so purely on determination to fight through the epidemic.

Now WDDC licensing want to crucify the taxi industry as well by increasing fees. This is not acceptable. You mention in your correspondence, that you have worked out what it costs to procure taxi plates and badges and this figure is reflected in the increase. Unbelievable, WDDC spend 20 minutes once a year renewing a vehicle plate, and 20 minutes once every three years for a drivers badge. Looks like your charges are equivalent to £350 an hour !!

I totally disagree with your proposed increases.

4

I am writing to clarify that there is no mention of Sunday rates a T2 on the new proposal for prices? I strongly object to this if this is the case and you will probably find no one will be available to work as everybody gets paid extra for Sunday's.

Also I object to the to rather large rise in fees for new licenses on an industry that is already struggling with price rises on everything. It seem to you are giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

Please consider my points

Thank you

5

I write further to your recent correspondence regarding the Tariff and Fee increase.

I believe that the increase in the HC vehicle renewal charge cannot possibly be justified by the Council in any way. The increase is completely disproportionate and in my opinion unfairly burdens drivers and operators so close the Covid 19 outbreak when drivers are still not returning to the levels of work they saw previously.

Furthermore could you clarify, as your letter is unclear, that Tariff 2 would come into affect for Sundays and Bank / Holidays as it is currently in the North Dorset Zone.

I also believe that Tariff 2 should commence at 22.30 hours as it does currently in the North Dorset Zone.

Could you please also confirm that the Local Authorities approved Taxi Meter Installers are aware of your intentions and have enough time to write the relevant programs etc in order to handle the influx of requests they will be subjected to in order to re-program taxi meters.

Also, I feel as you are now a unitary authority, Weymouth should be included in this matter. How can a unitary authority be so when there are clear distinctions between Weymouth and the rest of the County.

Furthermore, am I correct is assuming that all plates HC will be one color and PH will be an alternative colour throughout all the zones.

Thank you for your time and assistance with this matter and I gratefully look forward to receiving your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely;

Eric's Taxis

Reference is made to the correspondence you have sent out regarding licensing cost increases.

I firmly object to the substantial increase in licensing fees. This is absolutely unacceptable. **We have all suffered tremendous losses during the covid-19 lockdowns.** To give you an example, our company has lost 80% of our normal revenue due to the fact Sherborne International college, our main client, has closed down. We are nipping at straws to keep going. Airports have been closed and or running at 10% capacity during covid-19. Fuel costs are currently at unacceptable highs and could reach £2 a litre within weeks. The small taxi companies, like ourselves, are going to close down. Only the larger taxi companies have the infrastructure to battle on, with support from Dorset council school contracts.

Furthermore, WDDC licensing does nothing to protect and support the licenced taxi companies. I sent an email to yourselves on 17th January 2022 at 12:31hrs complaining about Yeovil taxi companies operating illegally in Sherborne, some even advertising on social media that they are Sherborne operators. Nothing is done. I didn't even get a response or acknowledgement to my email from yourselves. I am in good mind to not renew any of my licences when they expire, and just operate without licenses. If Yeovil taxi companies can operate in Sherborne without WDDC licences, why should I bother to get licences renewed.

We all go to the expense of buying vehicles, licensing and insuring them and then pirates come across from Yeovil and take our business. If just one Sherborne taxi company tried that in Yeovil, South Somerset District Council would pounce on them.

I would agree to a 4% to 6% increase, which would be inline with general inflation. But not the extortionate increase you are proposing. Absolutely unacceptable. If we didn't have covid-19 lockdowns for two years, it would be a different story. If we were all making a fair income, an increase such as the one you are proposing would be okay. You need to take into consideration, the financial situation that all taxi companies have been placed in during covid-19 lockdowns.

The national figure for taxi drivers who have left the industry, during covid-19 lockdowns, is sitting at 40% Councils need to promote taxi companies and encourage new drivers. By putting up licence fees, you are only going to close down more operators and chase new drivers away.

I am registering my objections to the council fees that have been put forward to us.

I find the fees far too high for a struggling industry. For the past 2 years we got zero help during the coronavirus pandemic, whether it be from licensing, Dorset Council or the Government. Because we don't have a business premises I was apparently not entitled to the "Local Government Grant" of which I would not have had to pay back, unlike other industries who also got helped with SEISS and furlough schemes on top of this. I had to take out a £21,000 loan (which I have to pay back), to help my company survive the pandemic and get vehicles back on the road.

We have not had a taxi forum whether in person or a zoom meeting for over 3 years. When we have asked for help previously on numerous occasions about keeping the public off our taxi ranks so we are able to work, we have been threatened with black marks being put on our records if we leave our vehicles, and if caught 3 times we will have our license suspended. This is still a massive issue even now where taxis are unable to get onto the ranks in Purbeck. We have even received verbal and almost physical abuse on drivers just for informing a member of the public they were parked on a taxi rank. Just to show how bad this issue is I list my findings when I am working in Wareham alone below, which I was requested to do after phoning licensing regarding an abusive customer who had called myself regarding informing his partner she was parked on a taxi rank:

04/12/2021	21:05	Mercedes	North Street
05/12/2021	12:20	Ford	North Street
05/12/2021	13:27	Toyota	North Street
05/12/2021	13:27	BMW	North Street
05/12/2021	13:47	Audi	North Street
05/12/2021	14:24	BMW	North Street
05/12/2021	14:37	Ford	North Street
08/12/2021	13:10	Mitsubishi	North Street
12/12/2021	13:15	Vauxhall	North Street
12/12/2021	13:23	Nissan	North Street
13/12/2021	07:54	Ford	North Street
13/12/2021	07:56	VW	North Street
15/12/2021	15:57	BMW	North Street
15/12/2021	16:08	Vauxhall	North Street
15/12/2021	16:12	Renault	North Street
15/12/2021	16:17	Saab	North Street

17/12/2021	12:48	Audi	North Street	
17/12/2021	12:55	VW	North Street	
17/12/2021	13:40	Audi	North Street	
17/12/2021	14:45	VW	North Street	
17/12/2021	15:35	Citroen	North Street	
17/12/2021	16:39	Vauxhall	North Street	
17/12/2021	16:39	Toyota	North Street	
17/12/2021	16:48	Vauxhall	North Street	
17/12/2021	17:00	BMW	North Street	
17/12/2021	18:00	Honda	North Street	
17/12/2021	18:00	Ford	North Street	
17/12/2021	18:02	Vauxhall	South Street	
17/12/2021	19:08	Nissan	North Street	
18/12/2021	12:29	VW	North Street	
20/12/2021	09:53	Vauxhall	North Street	People that threatened me on phone previously after telling them parked on taxi rank
20/12/2021	09:58	VW	North Street	
21/12/2021	15:45	Land Rover	North Street	
26/12/2021	09:58	Audi	North Street	
26/12/2021	10:07	BMW	North Street	
27/12/2021	10:38	Ford	North Street	
29/12/2021	15:45	Honda	North Street	
29/12/2021	16:10	Land Rover	North Street	
29/12/2021	16:42	Vauxhall	North Street	
31/12/2021	19:02	VW	South Street	
31/12/2021	19:03	Ford	North Street	
02/01/2022	13:49	VW	North Street	
04/01/2022	15:16	Nissan	North Street	
04/01/2022	15:16	Renault	North Street	
04/01/2022	15:17	Skoda	North Street	
07/01/2022	15:05	Ford	North Street	

07/01/2022	15:05	VW	North Street	
07/01/2022	15:24	Nissan	North Street	
08/01/2022	13:19	Vauxhall	North Street	
12/01/2022	12:49	BMW	North Street	
12/01/2022	12:49	Toyota	North Street	
12/01/2022	14:12	Volvo	North Street	
12/01/2022	14:13	Peugeot	North Street	
12/02/2022	11:52	Tesla	North Street	
12/02/2022	11:56	Nissan	North Street	
12/02/2022	16:00	Skoda	North Street	
12/02/2022	16:36	Mazda	North Street	
12/02/2022	18:25	Ford	North Street	
13/02/2022	10:45	VW	North Street	
13/02/2022	11:03	Renault	North Street	
13/02/2022	11:17	VW	North Street	
13/02/2022	12:27	VW	North Street	
13/02/2022	12:27	Ford	North Street	
13/02/2022	12:58	Jaguar	North Street	
13/02/2022	13:37	Vauxhall	North Street	
13/02/2022	13:57	VW	North Street	
19/02/2022	12:35	VW	North Street	Verbally abusive saying be didn't know it was a Taxi Rank and almost kicked taxi
19/12/2022	13:40	Ford	North Street	
19/02/2022	13:47	Audi	North Street	
19/02/2022	22:22	BMW	North Street	
20/02/2022	14:29	Alfa Romeo	North Street	
20/02/2022	14:29	BMW	North Street	

Clearly parking enforcement officers are not doing their job properly even when asked by licensing, and these are just the vehicles whilst I have been around. There is clearly an issue. Also with the dezoning, we will require more taxi ranks for our money as technically if we wish to now rank in other zones there will not be room. Wareham alone can fit 1-2 vehicles on South Street, and 2 on North Street which is constantly being abused by the public. I would suggest further ranks in Wool & Wareham Station, Bovington and Lulworth Cove at a minimum. It appears there seems to be a lot of

money “thrown away” into making cycle ways that cyclists don’t even use, than being put into the right sectors that actually need the council’s help.

Personally unless we start receiving more help from licensing, and get more service for our money I will not agree to the rise in fees.

Regards

Excel Taxis Network

Excel Taxis Wareham Xways Cars Durdle Door Cabs Corfe Castle Taxis Silver Cars

8

Thank you for letter regarding the new fees. I still think that the fee for the operator’s licence is unfair £416 for operating 1 vehicle compared to a large firm with over 50 on their books, surely a fair scheme would be based on the amount of vehicles operated and time spent by the council policing this?

Best Regards

Here 2 There Cars

9

Well this seems strange after receiving your letter it seems the council are not listening to any of us here in Weymouth.

Point 1

The hackney association of Weymouth sent you a proposal for the fare increase that apparently you agreed in principle then decided to change it why !!

Point 2

How can you justify an increase in license fee for cars by such an amount when we now have to pay for a MOT at your registered garage's who will no doubt charge a premium just because it's a taxi.

Point 3

MOT test for a car what is the point in having a certified MOT fitted by a qualified technician then a certificate issued only to be over ridden by a MOT mechanic who isn't even qualified to even fit it let alone know how to use it.

I would like my objections to be noted on these points as no consideration has been made in how this policy has been made without proper conciliation with anyone from the hackney association just bulldozed through without proper thought

Regards

10

I've received your email re the New Policy, but the link to be able to read the full document doesn't work for me. Can you advise?

I have also received your letter with proposed new fees. I'd like to express our concern that the fees for PHV licence, both new and renewal, will increase so much, especially as this is an annual payment. We will be looking at an annual increase of at least £600 in licensing fees.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Disabled Transport Services Ltd

11

Thank you for the letter outlining the new proposed fees. Whilst nobody likes to see increases there need to be better understanding as to how these fees have been calculated.

Could you please direct me to where I can find the accounts for Hackney carriage and private hire vehicle fees? I have searched extensively and cannot find them. I understand that a local authority must take into account any surplus or deficit generated from fees levied in previous years in respect of meeting the reasonable costs of administering the licensing fees provided by ss.53 and 70 of the LG(MP) Act 1976.

Dorset Council areas of deprivation are largely located in the most urban areas, in particular Weymouth and Portland area. According to ONS the average weekly wage in Weymouth is £286. The average monthly residential rent between Oct 20 - Sep 21 is £755 and this is the highest ever recorded. Coupled with Weymouth and Portland paying the higher end of average fuel prices in the UK, its having an impact on profits.

Based on conservative figures it costs the average driver of their own vehicle £260 a week just to keep the vehicle serviced, taxed, MOT, insured, licenced, tyres, fuel and subscriptions to a PH office. This is before any purchase of vehicle or finance is included and any repairs have been factored in. Also before any DBS checks and medicals. This they must earn before they break even. Drivers are still financially struggling from the effects of lockdowns from Covid 19 and will do so.

Whilst I appreciate the simplicity having one fee structure, there are differing earning capacities from different areas of Dorset Council.

12

I am objecting to the new rise this is due to an already rising in living costs in our everyday lives also the rising of petrol/diesel the fact that we do not know how this years going to pan out already and you will be making it all the more difficult for me and some others to make this a viable business to be in.

13

I must object strongly to the changes made to the fare increase proposed by the Weymouth and Portland Hackney Carriage Association. The requested fare increase was a result of a vote taken at a meeting of the Association. You have increased the initial charge and the extras without any consultation. So please would you record this email as an objection from the W&PHCA to YOUR proposed fare increase.

I was also expecting the fee for vehicle licensing to be reduced. When W&PBC conducted licensing, the licensing officer carried out the taxi tests which was paid for by the licensee as part of the licensing fee. Now that the Taxi test has been farmed out to a third party, I was expecting, now that Dorset Council is up and running, for the cost of the test to be removed from the licensing fee. So I must object to the raise in the cost of licensing a vehicle, and request the fee is adjusted accordingly.

Yours Sincerely

Chairman W&PHCA