

Licencing Committee 11.3.22

Chair: Deb Holden, EDC Solicitor: Rebecca Harrison, Licencing Officer: Steve Wilde.
Councillors: Colin Atkinson, Angela Meadowcroft, Joan Raine, Doug Lawson, Lara Harker, Peter Barker, Michael Hanley
Report by Michael Hanley.

Proposed Changes to Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Tariffs.

The Local Government Act of 1976 states that district councils may fix taxi fares in their area. Taxi drivers have approached the licencing team due to financial increases.

Steve Wilde (SW, Licencing Officer): There has been no increase in fares since 2011. We are considering a few increases. The taxi drivers have had increased expenses: increased cost of vehicle purchase, tyres which some drivers change every two months, taxi have to have MOTs every six months. There has been a big increase in the cost of fuel, insurance and road tax. Exhaust pipes also need replacing and drivers salaries have increased. There is a shortage of drivers in the area. Also there is a shortage of taxies in Penrith, Alston, Appleby and Kirkby Stephen.

A lot of the drivers are coming up for retirement.

SW went through the charge rates: Flag fare (charge when you get into the taxi at the start of the journey): £2.50. There are three different tariffs depending on time of day or whether it is a public holiday. Tariff 1: daytime, £2.50/first eight tenths of a mile, Tariff 2: night-time, £3.50. Tariff 3: holiday rates, £4.50. Each subsequent 1/10 of a mile : 0.25/0.35/0.45p. SW proposed to increase the first 8/10ths of a mile by 50p for each tariff and increase the subsequent 1/10th of a mile by 5p. The soiling charge is currently £75. This is the charge made if a passenger vomits or urinates in the taxi. It is proposed that this increases to £100. Current charges are low compared to other areas of the county. In Oxford the flag fare is £7.50 compared to £2.50 in Eden.

Mike Tonkin (MT): Is it a big job to adjust the meter?

SW: Certain garages can do this. A qualified mechanic can do it in about an hour. I do not know the cost.

MT: How do they get the soiling charge paid by the customer?

SW: That's up to the operators. The driver can call the police.

Joan Raine: The government recommends review of fares every three years. This is a long time since the last review. It seems like its something we have missed.

Doug Lawson: Councillor Raine's comments are very valid. The price increases are very necessary. The taxi drivers would like to see bigger increases. They would like to see more frequent reviews.

Peter Baker: These increases are actually below inflation. A pound in 2011 is equivalent to £1.30 now. I think the increases should be greater.

SW: I think we need to think about the public. We have to give the public 14 days notice to object after we have published the increases in the local paper. If this goes ahead we would be at the same level as South Lakeland, if more, then we will be by far the most expensive part of Cumbria for taxi fares.

Colin Atkinson: Could we reduce the cost of the Hackney Carriage Test (to attract more drivers)?

SW: That would be up to the committee. During the pandemic we had problems getting GPs to do the health checks.

The committee voted to increase the fares in line with the report.