



## Community Services and Licensing Committee

### Task and Finish Group Taxi Fares - Third Meeting – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017

#### 1 **Present:**

- Councillor Steve Robinson – Chair of Community Services and Licensing Committee
- Councillor John Jones
- Councillor George Butcher
- Councillor Gordon Craig
- Rachel Andrew - Principal Licensing Officer
- Hannah Eaton – Licensing Officer

#### 2 **Purpose of Meetings:**

For the Councillors on the Task and Finish Group to consider the proposal put forward by Stroud Taxi Association for a fare increase, together with comments from representatives of Stroud Taxi Association that attended the last meeting, and to make a recommendation to Community Services and Licensing Committee.

#### 3 **Task and Finish Group observations**

- 3.1 Stroud Taxi fares have not had an increase since 2011.
- 3.2 Stroud Taxi Association submitted a previous request for a fare increase in 2016. Since that time there have been other taxi fare increases in the County namely Cheltenham and Gloucester.
- 3.3 The comparison table shows that Stroud's current rates are on average now slightly lower than some other Gloucestershire Authorities. However it is noted that each authority has rates coming into force at different times so it is difficult to compare accurately. In particular the other authorities only have a rate 3 for bank holidays, Christmas and New Year whereas in Stroud rate 3 is a night time rate.
- 3.4 The price of petrol has increased slightly since 2016 although it is not as high as it was in 2011 when the current fees were set.
- 3.5 The trade explained that other costs have gone up since 2011 such as insurance, vehicle maintenance costs and general cost of living.
- 3.6 The trade said that fuel in Stroud area is more expensive than Cheltenham and Gloucester.

- 3.7 The trade have put forward a similar proposal to the one they submitted in 2016 (which was refused). However this time they have not asked for any increase in waiting time and have reduced the increase requested for rate 3.
- 3.8 The Task and Finish group felt there was some scope for an increase for Stroud Rates. The Bank of England website suggests that between 2011 and 2016 inflation has gone up by on average 2.3 % per year\*. So, by 2018 when any new fare could come into force, inflation is most likely to have gone up by 16.1%. On average the proposal put forward by the trade leads to a 10% increase. The group felt this was a reasonable percentage. The exception is the trade proposal for the yardage for rate 2 which would give a 21% increase. At the meeting the trade put forward an alternative which would give a 12% increase.
- 3.9 The trade's proposal with the amendment to rate 2 will put Stroud in a comparable position with those other Gloucestershire authorities that charge the highest fares in the County.
- 3.10 The trade have requested that rate 3 should come into effect one hour earlier at midnight rather than 01.00. The trade gave the reason being that the night time economy in Stroud has changed over the years and now there is limited work from 01.00 onwards. The Task and Finish group supported this proposal provided that, as a compromise, rate 1 also comes in to effect an hour earlier at 06.00 instead of 07.00. This will benefit early morning workers and persons with early morning appointments. The trade said most people using taxis between 06.00 and 07.00 were commuters going to the train station who were paying on account. The trade asked that the start time for rate 1 should remain at 07.00. However the Task and Finish group still felt that the start time for rate 1 should be brought forward to 06.00 if rate 3 comes in an hour earlier.
- 3.11 In recognition that pushchairs are essential for parents with children in the same way that a wheelchair is essential for people who have difficulty walking, the Task and Finish Group felt the same rule should apply to both and there should be no extra charge for pushchairs.
- 3.12 The trade are happy to remove the £3 extra charge for paying by cheque as customers rarely pay by cheque.
- 3.13 The trade proposed adding a £3 charge for payment by credit or debit card. They explained that they have to pay a monthly cost of around £27 to hire a card machine or they are charged a cost for each transaction for both credit and debit payments. Further investigation, however, indicates that new laws are coming in from January 2018 that will ban surcharges for credit and debit cards. For this reason Group recommend that this proposal is rejected.

\*Source:

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/default.aspx>

**4 Task and Finish Group's Final Recommendations :**

- a) Support proposed change of start time of **rate 3** to start 1 hour earlier at midnight instead of 01.00 on Monday to Sunday
- b) Recommend that the start time of **rate 1** also starts 1 hour earlier at 06.00 instead of 07.00 Monday to Friday (Saturday and Sunday to stay at 07:00 start time)
- c) Support proposed changes to starting rate and yardage for **rate 1** giving **12% increase for starting rate** and **10% increase for a running mile**
- d) Support proposed change to starting rate for **rate 2** giving **8.3% increase for starting rate** and recommend a change to yardage that will give a **12.3% increase for a running mile**
- e) Support the proposed change to yardage for **rate 3** with **0% increase for Starting rate** and **11% increase for a running mile**
- f) Remove the 20p extra for pushchairs
- g) Remove charge of £3.00 for cheque payments
- h) Not support the Trade proposal to add a £3.00 extra charge for credit and debit card payments

**5 Comments on Other Points raised by the Stroud Taxi Association**

- 5.1 Stroud Taxi Association asked for meetings every 18 months with the Task and Finish Group to discuss relevant issues. The Group agreed to this would be useful.
- 5.2 Stroud Taxi Association representatives raised a query about the policy on taxi badges. The current policy states that drivers will be issued with two badges, one to be worn on the driver and one displayed in the vehicle. The trade suggested that this should be changed to just one badge displayed in the vehicle. The Task and Finish Group felt that it was important for passengers to be able to easily identify that a driver is licensed and feel it is appropriate that the driver also wears a badge on their person. Having 2 badges makes it easy for the public to check a driver is licensed. The Group recommended that no change is made to the driver badge policy at the current time.