

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 22 JUNE 2023

Report Title	Stroud District Council Taxi Fares 2023			
Purpose of Report	To consider recommendations by the Taxi Task and Finish Group to increase taxi fares for 2023 in Stroud District			
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RESOLVES to:</p> <p>a) Approve amendments to Stroud District Council’s taxi fare table in accordance with the recommendations of the Taxi Task and Finish Group detailed in Appendix B.</p> <p>b) If (a) is resolved, or any variation on the recommendation, approve the procedure and delegation for giving public notice and implementing the fare increase as detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report.</p>			
Consultation and Feedback	<p>The Task and Finish Group’s proposed recommendations for a fare increase have been circulated to all Stroud District Council licensed taxi and private hire drivers and to all approved meter fitters. The period for comment was 9th May 2023 and 29th May 2023.</p> <p>If Committee approves the proposed fare increase, there will be a statutory public notice period, giving 14 days for public comment, before any new fares can be implemented.</p>			
Report Author	<p>Rachel Andrew, Licensing Manager Tel: 01453 754401 Email: rachel.andrew@stroud.gov.uk</p>			
Options	<p>Alternative resolutions to the proposed decision are:</p> <p>(a) not make any changes to the current taxi fares Or (b) make alternative changes to current fares to those recommended by the Task and Finish Group in Appendix B</p>			
Background Papers	Not applicable			
Appendices	<p>Appendix A – Schedule of Comments from taxi licence holders Appendix B – Proposed variation to the Taxi Fare Table for Stroud District as recommended by the Taxi Task and Finish Group</p>			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 makes provision for the Council to set a table of fares which shows the rates for time, distance, and all other charges in connection with the hire of a hackney carriage. For the purposes of this report hackney carriages are referred to as taxis.
- 1.2 The table of fares are the rates to which Stroud District Council licensed taxi meters are set and it is the maximum they can charge their customer for any journey within the district. They can choose to charge a lesser fare.
- 1.3 The Council does not set the fares for private hire vehicles which must be pre-booked through an operator. The private hire fare must be agreed with the customer prior to the journey commencing.
- 1.4 Stroud District Council's current taxi fares are split into 3 rates which in summary are:
- Rate 1 - daytimes
 - Rate 2 – evenings, Sundays and all day on bank holidays
 - Rate 3 - night times, and all day on Christmas Day and New Years Day
- 1.5 Each rate is broken down into the following elements:
- Starting rate – the amount the meter will show when the journey starts.
 - Yardage – the distance in yards after which the meter adds an additional 30p to the fare when the vehicle is moving.
 - Waiting time – the time in seconds after which the meter adds an additional 30p to the fare if the vehicle is driving slowly or is stationary, for example at traffic lights.
- 1.6 Extras can be added to the fare for additional passengers or for bags etc.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 Stroud District Council's current taxi fare table came into force on 18th July 2022.
- 2.2 Last year this Committee agreed that every year Officers will check the CPI rate for March of that year. Where the CPI is more than 2.5% this will trigger a review of the taxi fares.
- 2.3 The [CPI for March 2023 was 8.9%](#).so meets the threshold for a review.
- 2.4 Trade representatives were invited to put forward a proposal to be considered by a Taxi Task and Finish Group
- 2.5 The Taxi Task and Finish Group was made up of Councillors Steve Robinson, John Jones and Nigel Prenter and was supported by Licensing Officers.

- 2.6 The Task and Finish Group held two meetings, one on 21st April 2023 to consider the initial proposal put forward by members of the taxi trade and one on 27th April 2023 to discuss it with representatives of the taxi trade.
- 2.7 The Task and Finish Group recognised that living costs and costs for maintaining vehicles has increased over the last 12 months and that an increase in fares is appropriate.
- 2.8 The trade requested a change in the start time of rate 1 from the current start time of 06:00 to a new start time of 07:00. The Task and Finish group did have some concerns about this as it would impact on people who must leave home early to catch a train for work or need to get to early appointments. The change would mean early customers would pay the higher rate 3 instead of rate 1. The trade representatives explained that many taxi businesses will not accept early bookings at the current rates as it is not worthwhile to get up for the early starts if it's on the lower rate 1. This means that people that want a taxi early cannot get one. It was clarified that throughout the whole journey the meter stays on the rate the journey starts on. There was consideration as to whether meters can be calibrated differently to automatically change rate mid journey. Automatic meters can be recalibrated to work like this; however, many drivers have manual meters, and it is not possible to change these meters mid journey. The Task and Finish Group and trade representatives agreed a compromise of pushing the start time of rate 1 on to 06:30.
- 2.9 The trade requested in an increase in the extra charge for soiling from £75 to £80. The Task and Finish Group felt this was acceptable.
- 2.10 The trade requested a new extra charge of £2.00 to be added to the table for carrying dogs (other than guide, hearing and assistance dogs which must be carried for no additional charge). The Task and Finish Group wanted more information on the reasoning for introducing a charge for dogs. The trade representatives explained that dogs can leave a mess in the vehicle from pet hair and dirty feet. The driver then must take the vehicle out of action to clean it. The Task and Finish Group also asked for clarification if this would be a charge per dog and it was concluded it would be a single charge no matter how many dogs were being carried. The Task and Finish Group felt that £2.00 charge was bit high, especially on a short journey, and was higher than other Gloucestershire authorities. A compromise of £1.50 for carrying dogs was agreed. It should be noted that it is optional for drivers to add extras so it is at their discretion whether to add the extra fee for dogs to the fare.
- 2.11 The trade requested an increase on starting rates on all three rates by 3% and changes to the yardage which would result in a 7% - 10% increase in total fares overall on all three rates. The Task and Finish Group had some concerns about this. There was a fare increase last year of 11% and the Task and Finish Group felt that, although inflation is still high, an increase of 5%- 6% would be more appropriate for this year, taking account that customers will also be feeling the hit from inflation and are likely to have less disposable income. An alternative proposal was put forward by the Task and Finish group that achieved this which the trade representatives agreed to.
- 2.12 The Task and Finish Group and trade representatives agreed the following proposal to be put out for consultation with all taxi licence holders:

- Change in start time of Rate 1 from 06:00 to 06:30
- Additional optional extra for carrying dogs of £1.50
- Increase in soilage charge from £75 to £80
- Increase in starting rates and fares across all three rates of approximately 6%

2.13 This proposal was circulated to approximately 100 taxi licence holders for their comments between 9th and 29th May 2023. A schedule of the responses is Appendix 1. There were 10 responses. Of those six supported the proposed increase in fares but three felt that fares should not be increased as it could make taxis a luxury item and decrease the number of people that use them. Four of the comments were that Rate 1 should not start until 07:00 rather than 06:30 as proposed. Two suggested that the soiling charge should be higher than the £80 proposed with a suggestion of £100. And three mentioned charges for carrying dogs and were either against it or felt that the soiling charge should be applied if the dog made a mess.

2.14 The Task and Finish Group have reviewed the responses and noted the comments. Overall they concluded that the number of responses was low, and there was not a majority objection to any of the proposals, they therefore decided to not make any amendments to their recommended proposed changes to the taxi fare table as shown in Appendix 2.

2.15 In accordance with the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, if a Council agrees to vary taxi fares, it must first give public notice as prescribed by the Act. The notice must state a period of at least 14 days for the public to make comment. If there are no objections the new fares will come into effect as soon as the public notice period expires.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The recommendation of the Task and Finish Group is that Committee resolves to approve the proposed changes to the taxi fare table as detailed in Appendix 2.

3.2 If Committee agrees with the recommendation and resolves to vary Stroud District taxi fares, it is recommended that the Committee also resolves to agree to the procedure as detailed below:

- a. Public notices showing the approved revised fares are published in Stroud News and Journal and the Dursley Gazette on 28th and 29th June 2023 inviting public comment. There will also be a notice at the Council Offices. The notices will specify that objections can be made up to 16th July 2023.
- b. If no objections are received within the notice period; or any objections are withdrawn, the revised fares to be effective from Monday 24th July 2023 or from the time any objections are withdrawn if after this date.
- c. If any objections are received during the notice period and are not withdrawn, the Head of Environmental Health will be authorised (in consultation with the Community Services and Licensing Committee Chair and Vice Chair and the Licensing Manager) to:

- (i) determine, following consideration of the objection(s) whether to approve the fare table with or without modifications; and
- (ii) set a date no later than 2 months of the expiration of the consultation period, being the date when the determined fares shall have effect.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The rate of inflation as shown by the CPI has triggered an annual review of Stroud District Council taxi fares. Members of the Taxi trade put forward an initial proposal which has been considered by the Taxi Task and Finish Group and a compromise for consultation was agreed. This was circulated to all the taxi licence holders for their comments. The Task and Finish Group have considered the comments and are recommending that the proposals shown on fare table in Appendix 2 are approved by the Committee.
- 4.2 They also recommend that Committee approves the procedure for putting out public notice, dealing with any comments and implementing fares with a provisional implementation date of 24th July 2023.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications within this report.

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5.2 Legal Implications

Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 empowers the Council to vary the table of fares in connection with the hire of a hackney carriage. The Council is legally obliged to publicise in a local newspaper, details of any variation to the table of fares, and to consider any objections received by way of a further hearing, if they are not withdrawn.

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5.3 Equality Implications

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

5.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.