

Licensing Applications Committee

28 September 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Hackney Carriage Fare Increase
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Mark Groves, Senior Licensing & Enforcement Officer
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport
Corporate priority	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That you consider the contents of this report.2. That you consider the objection submitted by a member of the public

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. From time to time the hackney carriage trade requests that the Council increases the amount they can charge their customers for transportation to their desired destinations, the last of which was 4th October 2022.
- 1.2. This is a further report following the Licensing Applications Committee meeting of the 13th July 2023 and the subsequent consultation period that followed and objection received.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection has delegated authority to approve and implement hackney carriage fare rises, having taken into account any recommendations expressed by the Licensing Applications Committee.
- 2.2 The Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection has delegated authority to advertise hackney carriage fare rises in a local newspaper, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. and include anything else which is relevant by way of Policy to this matter.
- 2.3 Currently in Reading hackney carriage fares are set by the Licensing Committee and all journeys taking place within Reading are paid in accordance with the fares set on the vehicle meter at the end of a journey.

3 The Proposal

- 3.1 Hackney carriage fares were reviewed by the Licensing Applications Committee at their October 2022 meeting. The committee granted an increase of £1 on the flag drop for both the day and night-time tariffs from £2.60 to £3.60 and £3.60 to £4.60 respectively.
- 3.2 The current charge available to drivers if a customer soils the taxi is £70 for the inside and £25 for the exterior. This was changed at the July 2022 committee meeting of the Licensing Applications Committee. These charges can be found within the table of fares as set out in Appendix I. There has been no request from the HC trade to increase these charges.

- 3.3 On the 4th June 2023 the chair of the Reading Taxi Association (RTA) wrote to the licensing section requesting that a report be put before the committee for a fare rise and supplied two options for consideration of the Licensing Applications Committee.
- 3.4 On 23rd June 2023 the Hackney Carriage Drivers who are not members of the RTA led by Mr Imran Ali, Mr Mohammad Afsar and Mr Johar Ali also requested a fare increase and supplied a further two options for the consideration of the Licensing Applications Committee.
- 3.5 On the 13th July 2023 the Licensing Applications Committee having had all of the options presented to them by the above parties resolved to accept Option 1 that was proposed by the RTA, this can be found at Appendix I.
- 3.6 As required under Section 65 (a) & (b) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 a consultation was carried out and during the 14 day period the licensing team received 1 objection from a member of the public.
- 3.7 The objection stated: *"I don't think black cab drivers need a pay rise as they have already had one in November and most employees only have one once a year you don't want to put people of getting a black cab especially as money is very tight at the moment for a lot of people and the cost of living is going up all the time I'm a regular user of black cabs and I will have to seek other options to get home"*. A copy of the email can be found at appendix II.
- 3.8 The objector has been emailed and asked by the licensing team on two occasions if they would like to appear before the Licensing Applications Committee to present their objection and respond to any questions asked by either members of the committee or the RTA or non-members but at the time of this meeting there has been no response from them. The emails can be found at appendices III & IV.
- 3.9 As there were no further objections received and there has been no response from the objector then the Licensing Applications Committee are asked to consider the objection outlining that a further increase will move people away from using the hackney carriage trade and look at other forms of transport or decide if they wish to continue with their original resolve of the 13th July 2023.
- 3.10 The Licensing Applications Committee may wish to note that in the light of this objection and that it must consider it, that it does not have to vary the proposed fare as a result of this and that the Licensing Applications Committee must set a second date, which cannot be more than 2 months after the first date specified when the new fares will come into force.
- 3.11 The first date specified when the new fares would have come into force was the 3rd August 2023.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The hackney carriage trade provides a valuable service to the public by being available to transport customers throughout the borough on a 24-hour basis.

3. Environmental and Climate Implications

There is no specific environmental or climate implication to this policy as any fare rise is likely to reduce customer usage due to the increased cost in the fares.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1 Proposed changes to hackney carriage fares are legally required to be advertised in a local newspaper. The proposal selected by the committee on the 13 July 2023 was advertised in a local newspaper for 14 days as required.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. An equality assessment is not required in respect of the increase of hackney carriage fares.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1 N/A

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 Section 65 (1) A district council may fix the rate or fares within the district as well for time and distance, and all other charges in connection with the hire of a vehicle or with the arrangements for hire of a vehicle; to be paid in respect of the hire of hackney carriages by means of a table (hereafter in this section referred to as “table of fares”) made or varied in accordance with the provisions of this section.
- 9.2 Section 65 (2) (a) When a district council make or vary a table of fares they shall publish in at least one local newspaper circulating in the district a notice setting out the table of fares or the variation thereof and specifying the period, which shall not be less than fourteen days from the date of the first publication of the notice, within which and the manner in which objections to the table of fares or variation can be made.
- 9.3 Section 65 (2) (b) A copy of the notice referred to in paragraph (a) of this subsection shall for the period of fourteen days from the date of the first publication thereof be deposited at the offices of the council which published the notice and shall at all reasonable hours be open to public inspection without payment.
- 9.4 Section 65 (3) If no objections to a table of fares or variation is duly made within the period specified, in the notice referred to in subsection (2) of this section, or if all objections so made are withdrawn, the table of fares or variation shall come into operation on the date of the expiration of the period specified in the notice or the date of withdrawal of the objection or, if more than one, of the last objection, whichever date is the later.
- 9.5 Section 65 (4) If an objection is duly made as aforesaid and is not withdrawn, the district council shall set a further date, not later than two months after the first specified date, on which the table of fares shall come into force with or without modifications as decided by them after consideration of the objections.
- 9.6 Section 65 (5) A table of fares made or varied under this section shall have effect for the purposes of the Act of 1847 as if it were included in hackney carriage byelaws made thereunder.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The cost of publishing the required notices is allowed for in existing budgets.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1 An objection was duly made as aforesaid and not withdrawn, the district council are required to set a further date, not later than two months after the first specified date which was the 3 August 2023, on which the table of fares shall come into force with or without modifications as decided by them after consideration of the objections. The required date must be no later than the 3 October 2023 and the hackney carriage meters will be re-chipped following this date when the licensing team have been able to arrange this.

12. Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

Appendices.

- I Resolve of the 13th July 2023 - Option 1 proposed by the Reading Taxi Association
- II Email from objector
- III Email sent to objector
- IV Second email sent to objector