

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Hackney Carriage Tariff Review</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	<b>Licensing and Appeals Committee on 14 January 2013</b>
<b>WARD</b>	<b>None Specific</b>
<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR</b>	<b>Paul Anstey, Joint Service Delivery Manager for Environmental Health &amp; Licensing</b>

**OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

To determine the Hackney Carriage tariff for the next twelve months.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Members are requested to consider:

1. Removal of the 50% surcharge where a vehicle is carrying more than four passengers – tariff 4 – 6
2. 10% rise in tariff
3. Reduce distance for flag 3 and 20p increment by 5%
4. No change.

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The report sets out the outcomes of initial consultation with existing drivers of Hackney Carriage Vehicles and some of the larger Operators for a review of Taxi Tariffs.

**Background**

Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 allows the Council to fix the rates for fares and other related charges in connection with the hire of Hackney Carriages. The Licensing & Appeals Committee agreed in March 2005 to review the taxi tariffs on an annual basis.

The last tariff increase was in May 2012, where it was resolved by members to adopt a 5% rise.

The views of the drivers regarding the next annual review were sought with a letter being sent to all 101 hackney carriage drivers and the larger operators in December 2012. The letter asked if the drivers wished for the tariff to change, for there to be no change with a view to re-consult next year and also that there be consideration for the removal of tariffs 4 – 6 (vehicles carrying five or more passengers).

Responses were received by 26 drivers, with 20 responses requesting no change, 2 responses to maintain the tariffs 4 – 6 and a 10% increase, 1 response for a fare increase and that the tariff 4 – 6 should remain, 1 response that the driver would rather use their own discretion on the tariff, 1 response in regard to removing the tariffs 4 – 6 and 1 response to reduce distance for flag £3 and 20p increment by 5%. These

responses are attached as Appendix I.

The trade publication, Private Hire and Taxi Monthly, publishes a league table of fares charged for a daytime two-mile journey in most areas of the Country. The current charge applicable to Wokingham and neighbouring authorities are shown in Appendix 2.

With regard to the Committee being requested to consider the removal of tariffs 4 – 6 the Licensing Team have received several complaints from members of the public in respect of the 50% surcharge. Extracts from the complaints are as follows:

“We have been charged £36.00 for a 7 mile trip when it is normally £12.00”

“I would like to bring to your attention which I feel was an excessive charge made by a taxi I used last night. Myself and 4 others got the taxi at approximately 11.30 p.m. from Wokingham station to Bearwood Road a trip of approximately 2.5 – 3 miles, there were not delays in the journey. I understand there is a different rate after 11 pm but the increase from 4 – 5 passengers being an additional 50% seems to be disproportional. Perhaps this feedback could be taken on board prior to the next review of the fares.”

“My wife and I and three friends have just been charged the best part of £35 for a taxi from the Ship Inn in Wokingham to Earley. This is approximately 5 miles. A 5 seat cab, we dropped 3 friends off at Froghall Drive then came straight to Earley. I have been told that this is correct. Either we were ripped off or you are doing your best to put taxis out of business, never again will we get a taxi in Wokingham”.

Research has been carried out into the fares charged by surrounding local authorities. To date one other local authority (Bracknell) has a similar surcharge but are currently consulting to remove this additional charge.

The other local authorities either have no charge at all, or they use ‘extras’ on the meters as follows:

Slough:	Additional passengers over 2 – 20p per additional person
Reading:	Additional passengers over 1 – 20p per additional person
Guildford:	Additional passengers over 1 – 50p per additional person
RBWM:	Additional passengers over 1 – 20p per additional person
West Berkshire	No specific additional fee

Some authorities have a maximum ‘extras’ charge per journey of £1.00. Other authorities also have a £1 booking fee for advance bookings.

## **Consultation**

The following procedures are laid down by legislation and must be followed when making changes to a table of tariff and fares:

- 1.1 A note of the proposed changes must be published in at least one local newspaper circulating in the district. The notice must specify a period of at least 14 days from the date of publication when objections can be made to the Council. (This costs in the region of £950).

- 1.2 A copy of the published notice must be made available at the Borough Council Offices for public inspection, free of charge at all reasonable times.
- 1.3 If there are no objections, or those made are withdrawn, the variation in table of fares comes into effect of the expiration of the time allowed for public consultation in the notice.

If there are any objections, and they are not withdrawn, the Council must set a date within two months of the expiry date for public consultation, and then consider the objections made before agreeing a table of tariffs and fares.

### Analysis of Issues

Wokingham Borough Council set the Hackney Carriage Tariff. Realistic rates must be set by the Council that balances the economic needs of licensees, whilst ensuring that persons using hackney carriages are not overcharged. There is also the need to ensure that hackney carriage proprietors are not priced out of the market to private hire firms, although the set tariff is the maximum that can be charged. It is open to negotiation between the passenger and driver if a lower fare is to be charged.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Not Applicable		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Not Applicable		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Not Applicable		

#### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

#### Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services and priorities?)

Not applicable

#### Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

None

#### List of Background Papers

Existing taxi tariffs  
 Private Hire and Taxi Monthly – table of comparative tariffs  
 Consultation responses  
 Complaint letters received  
 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976  
 Town & Police Clauses Act 1847

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<b>Date</b> 31 December 2012	<b>Version No.</b> One

# TARIFF REVIEW CONSULTATION 2012/3

APPENDIX ONE

Badge/OP	No Change	Change	Comments
DD690	√		
DD689	√		
DD725	√		
DD626	√		
DD726	√		
DD677	√		
DD706	√		
DD746		√	<p>First of all we want to say that we can not compare wokingham to other councils because of its irrational and controversial decisions about wheelchair accessibility. Council have asked the drivers to bring these big mpv s. And these are mostly 7_8. Seaters. It will be very unfair and unjust towards the drivers. To finish these tariffs. Instead if there are any complaints against the drivers. These complaints are against those. Particular greedy drivers who we had been asking to take action against. We demand strict action against the wrong drivers</p> <p>Leave all the tarriffs as it is. We should have been given atleast 10% rise last year. It cost a lot of time to recover that meter change charges. And 5% increase was very unjust. Instead of increasing the fares we demand strongly to put a minimum charge as many companies are manipulating the drivers by charging less than£1 a mile. Resulting private hire trade killing the business and forcing both hackney and private hire drivers to do upto 90 hours a week. It was a busy time of the year bad most most drivers were busy. You might not get back the responseSo please increase the time lim</p>

			<p>First of all we want to say that we can not compare wokingham to other councils because of its irrational and controversial decisions about wheelchair accessibility. Council have asked the drivers to bring these big mpv s. And these are mostly 7_8. Seaters. It will be very unfair and unjust towards the drivers. To finish these tariffs. Instead if there are any complaints against the drivers. These complaints are against those. Particular greedy drivers who we had been asking to take action against. We demand strict action against the wrong drivers Leave all the tarriffs as it is. We should have been given atleast 10% rise last year. It cost a lot of time to recover that meter change charges. And 5% increase was very unjust. Instead of increasing the fares we demand strongly to put a minimum charge as many companies are manipulating the drivers by charging less than£1 a mile. Resulting private hire trade killing the business and forcing both hackney and private hire drivers to do upto 90 hours a week.</p> <p>It was a busy time of the year bad most most drivers were busy. You might not get back the responseSo please increase the time lim</p>		
DD701		√			
DD465	√				
DD761	√				
DD765	√				
DD431	√				
DD306	√				
DD347	√				
DD631	√				
DD593	√		No need to change a tariff four or six up to Council if they want to change and also fixing tariff 5 Just should be tariff one and two		
DD672	√				
DD499	√				

DD051		√	I would suggest that the excess passenger tariffs are left alone these tariffs or the extra fares have been in force since the early ninties so people have had 20 years to get over any confusion and of course our investment in putting these vehicles on the road also please bear in mind Wokingham Council is one of the richest in the country has the best education in the country and is one of the healthiest places to live, so how on earht can you compare this district to Reading or Bracknell who are so much lower in the ratings than us. If this does go through I will not allow more than 4 people in my vehicle - fair wear and tear and I will also try to lead a campaign for the re-introduction of saloon cars on to the ranks as Hackney Carriages.		
DD764	√				
DD582		√	Having more space I would be almost always f give a customer a discount in most circumstances but on my own discretion		
DD713	√				
DD745	√				
DD475			Letter submitted - at end of report		
DD343		√	Reduce distance fro flag £3 and 20p increment by 5% If you take away tariff 4 - 6 two things may happen 1. The 4 seater taxis will be largley ignored if people can get bigger and roomier vehicle for same price even up to 4 people 2. The minibus drivers will fold their bench seats down and refuse to take more than 4 people as the hassle of carrying 7 - 8 loud drunk and aggressive people would not be directly proportional to the reward let alone the economics of the extra fuel per weight carried on board etc. Also for Heathrow jobs at the moment 4 people go for £35 and up to 8 people go for £49 whats the point of having a more costly minibus if you cannot charge accordingly		

Dear Taxi licensing/ Wokingham Borough Council

Report- Removal of Tariffs 4, 5 & 6 - Additional /Surcharge 50% for carrying up to 8 Persons/Passengers.

Reading your letter dated 12/12/2012 with great concern, notably the Tariff elimination. Firstly feel, should have received a separate correspondence on this seismic intention of getting rid of Tariffs 4, 5 and 6 and not lumping it together with the annual tariff review consultation. Seems yet another example of cost cutting. Having spoken to a few colleagues, most have completely missed your intention to present a report in for the abolishment of the additional 50% to the fare when exceeding four persons/ passengers. Some failed to carry on reading the moment they read tariff review consultation; thinking must be that time of the year again. There is no real satisfactory explanation, lack of detail and generally vague. Regurgitating the same reasons as previously stated. Consulting the trade at such a busy festive period with a fortnight notice is simply unfair.

Reading your letter, the removal of tariffs 4, 5 & 6 is not evident that in turn, scrap the additional/surcharge 50% for carrying up to 8 persons/ passengers. Thus the muted response from the taxi trade. Mentioning, confusion to the members of public only misconstrues further. These are two separate issues, the first being contentious.

Our trade tariffs being put in line with neighbouring authorities is just not comparable. Each neighbouring authority has a complete different array of vehicles. Wokingham's taxi fleet is mainly MPV's, since the implementation of disabled access taxis 5 years prior. Reading Borough Council have the iconic London black cab (5 seater) and Bracknell Borough Council having settled for the Fiat Doblo (4 seater) which has no luggage space due to the wheel chair ramp at the tailgate.

Would like to think Wokingham Borough is unique, individual and different as are their residents and visitors alike and their travel needs. Taxi travel is either a necessity or a luxury. Travel plans are invariably tailored to suit an individual's needs and requirements. In essence what we have are variables. For these reasons the taxi trade vehicles need to be practical, versatile and not rigid. Importantly offering customers/ client choice. E.g. there are about 60 South West Trains taxi permit holders who mainly rely on rail passengers for a living and many more at Twyford railway station. Rail passengers with cycles, mum's with double push chairs to mention a few. Wokingham having a direct train line to London Gatwick airport. Families returning have much luggage one needs to at least accommodate. Our taxi work is seasonal, with the festive season almost over, having catered for office work Christmas parties and groups of people. Weekends always tend to get groups of friends/ families. Seasonal trends like Royal Ascot (Waterloo line), Henley Royal Regatta (Paddington line), Rugby autumn internationals and the Six Nations, Twickenham (Waterloo line), all draw mass crowds in short time and space that require transport. Wokingham taxi fleet already being flexible is perfectly positioned.

Due to rail disruption at times being order of the day, whenever the trains are in paralysis and always take couple/ few hours to provide alternate transport, i.e. bus replacement service. We as a trade provide an immense invaluable service. Only a few weeks ago severe rail disruption, no service

between Wokingham and Ascot train station meant each driver doing at least half a dozen MPV shuttle runs some on behalf of South West Trains.

Suspect the 50% additional surcharge was implemented having recognised the MPV's cost double the price to purchase compared to a conventional taxi. We already pay higher insurance premiums and incur increased running costs primarily more fuel. Also the extra wear and tear especially tyres and brakes are pushing up servicing costs. These vehicles are much more sturdy and safe. Has anyone considered the NCAP Ratings for any vehicle prior to becoming a taxi? Personal and passenger safety is paramount.

Consumerism is demand/ supply and customer choice. A varied workforce i.e. MPV's cater for the variables. Having able to cater for ones travel needs is surely quintessentially good customer service. Customer service is all about repeat business and essentially customer satisfaction. Our MPV's deliver on such service.

Just to remind Wokingham Borough Council, the trade previously was never consulted regarding the 50% additional / surcharge for exceeding 4 passengers. It seems yet again another spectacular u-turn by WBC.

Difficult to suggest an alternative because as yet have no access to the intended report. Possibly if members of the public are getting confused suggest better information and education/ local press. If the 50% surcharge is intended to be scrapped surely it is down to you to provide an alternative. An amicable solution has to be reached, as one driver quipped will remove seats and revert to a four seater. Or even refuse to pick up anymore than four persons/passengers obviously will create further problems.

Importantly a perspective balance between the taxi driver and customer has to be ensured, that is fair to both.

Yours Sincerely,



Taxi Driver -14 years

SWT Permit Holder – 14 years



Comparison of current tariff with neighbouring authorities

	<b>Wokingham (31)*</b>	<b>Reading (11)*</b>	<b>Bracknell Forest (70)*</b>	<b>West Berkshire (14)*</b>
	<b>Tariff 1 (06.00 – 23.00)</b>	<b>Tariff 1 (06.00 – 22.00)</b>	<b>Tariff 1 (07.00-23.00)</b>	<b>Tariff 1 (06.00-22.00)</b>
Flag	£3.00	£2.20	£3.00	£2.80
One Mile	£4.00	£4.50	£4.00	£4.45
Two Miles	£6.40	£6.60	£5.40	£6.55
Waiting	20p – 38 seconds	20p – 46 seconds	20p – 36 seconds	15p – 81 seconds
	<b>Tariff 2 (23.00 – 06.00)</b>	<b>Tariff 2 (22.00 – 06.00)</b>	<b>Tariff 2 (23.00 – 7.00)</b>	<b>Tariff 2 (22.00 – 6.00)</b>
Flag	£4.50	£3.20	£4.50	£3.80
One Mile	£6.00	£6.60	£6.00	£6.40
Two Miles	£9.00	£9.80	£8.10	£9.60
Waiting	30p – 40 seconds	20p – 42 seconds	20p – 36 seconds	20p – 72 seconds
Soiling Charge	£50.00	£40.00	£50.00	Charge for fouling
Date Introduced	May 2011	November 2008	June 2011	April 2012

\* Denotes position in The National League Tables Averages – December 2012 – source Private Hire and Taxi Monthly