

Report to Licensing Committee

Date of meeting: 26th March 2024



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject: Taxi Tariff

Officer contact for further information:

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Committee Secretary:

Recommendations: For Information

Background

Under section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, any charge made by a Hackney carriage, must not exceed the table of fares published by the licensing authority, irrespective of how that journey was arranged (from a rank or street, being hailed or pre-booking the journey).

The previous fee tariff was adopted in 2014, and whilst subject to a review in 2018 it had not been increased since. The tariff was scheduled to be reviewed as part of the wider taxi policy review however, due to increasing fuel prices, cost of living and inflation, it became necessary to bring that review forward to support our licensed taxi trade.

Benchmarking showed that based on an average 2-mile fare, Epping Forest District Councils tariff was the lowest in Essex and we were ranked 279TH lowest nationwide out of 355 Councils.

Council	2 Mile Fare	Essex Ranking	National Ranking	% Increase since March
Uttlesford	£8.30	1	9	0%
Brentwood	£8.10	2	71	23%
Chelmsford	£7.70	3	28	8%
Colchester	£6.90	4	93	0%
Southend on Sea*	£6.80 (includes £0.40 surcharge)	5	118	6%
Tendering	£6.80	5	118	6%
Braintree	£6.70	6	124	8%
Harlow	£6.60	7	143	0%
Basildon	£6.40	8	165	0%
Castle Point	£6.40	8	167	7%
Rochford	£6.20	9	215	0%
Thurrock	£6.00	10	262	0%
Epping Forest	£5.50	11	310	0%
Maldon	negotiate individual fares	Unknown	Unknown	

In October 2022, Licensing Committee were presented with a number of options for consideration, and it was agreed that the increase proposed under option 3 be endorsed.

Option 3

Increase tariff for the first 1760 yards (1 mile) across tariffs rates 1,2,3 and 4 by £1.00 and £0.30 for each additional unit of 176 yards or part thereof or period of 40 seconds.

	Minimum daytime fare for up to 1 mile	Each additional unit of 176 yards (160.9m) or part thereof	Average 2-mile journey
Rate 1 - hiring between 6am & 10pm Mon to Sat	£4.50	£0.30 (£3.00 per mile)	£7.50
Rate 2 - hiring between 10pm & 6am Mon to Fri	£4.70	£0.40 (£4.00 per mile)	£8.70
Rate 3 - hiring on Christmas, Boxing & New Year's Day and after 6pm on Christmas & New Year's Eve	£5.10	£0.50 (£5.00 per mile)	£10.10
Rate 4 – hiring on Christmas, Boxing & New Year's Day and after 6pm on Christmas and New Year's Eve	£6.50	£0.60 (£6.00 per mile)	£12.50

The setting of fares is a function of the Executive and therefore cannot be undertaken by a regulatory committee or full Council and before any published fares can be increased the Council must undertake consultation with the trade and public consultation by way of placing a public notice in a local newspaper. The consultation period must last no less than 14 days.

Due to Town/Parish Council elections in May 2023 and Cabinet timetable constraints, consultation on the new tariff was delayed however, on 9th October 2023, Cabinet agreed to the public consultation endorsed by the Licensing Committee and in doing so it agreed to:

- (1) Extend the minimum 14-day public consultation required to allow for the proposal to be properly considered and sufficient time for responses to be made.
- (2) Where no objections are made, the proposed taxi tariff be implemented on the date specified in the public notice, or
- (3) Where objections are made, it will reconsider the proposal in light of those objections within 2 months of the date specified in the public notice.

The consultation began on 30th November 2023 and ended on 31st December 2023.

During this period the Councils Licensing team consulted widely on the proposed tariff increase. This included a public notice being published in the Epping Forest Guardian on 30th November, on the Councils website and at Civic Office.

All taxi drivers, operators, Councillors, Town and Parish Councils were directly consulted, a press release was issued, it was included on the EFDC mailing list (made up of mostly residents) and posted on our social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) throughout December.

During the consultation the Councils Licensing Team received 27 responses from residents, taxi drivers/operators, Epping Town Council, Loughton Town Council and a ward Councillor.

13 of those responses were in favour of the proposed increase, 6 related to fares being charged by private hire vehicles which the Council does not have the power to regulate and is not part of this consultation, 2 opposed any increase to the existing tariff, 5 raised concerns

that the proposed £4.50 fare for the first mile was too low but otherwise no objections and 1 suggested that the fares should increase to £5.50 for the first mile and to £0.50 for each additional 176 yards or part thereof.

Cabinet met to consider the responses on 15th January 2024, and it agreed that the tariff detailed in the consultation (option 3), represented what it believed to be fair increase for drivers, whilst maintaining a reasonable fare that passengers can be expected to pay.

However, in reaching its decision, Cabinet acknowledged the concerns expressed by some respondents who believe the starting fare for the first mile to be too low, and it agreed that the fare will be subject to further review in 12 months' time following the implementation of the new tariff and at regular intervals going forward to ensure that fares remain reasonable and fair to both the licensed taxi trade and the fare paying public.

Accordingly, the taxi tariff proposed in the consultation was agreed and came into effect on **28th February 2024**.

All Hackney Carriage drivers were advised of the decision and the meter update took place at North Weald Airfield on 28th, 29th February and 7th March 2024.

Over this three-day period, the Council updated 173 meters to the new tariff, which represents 81% of the fleet. The remaining 19% of drivers have been given guidance on how to update their meters going forward.

It should be noted that the Council can only set a maximum taxi tariff, it is permissible for Hackney Drivers to charge a lesser fare should they wish to do so. Therefore the remaining 19% of drivers can continue to operate under the previous taxi tariff until such time as the meter is updated to reflect the new maximum permitted fare.