

**TO: LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**11 OCTOBER 2012**

---

**HACKNEY CARRIAGE SURCHARGE**  
**Director of Environment, Culture and Communities**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to go out to consultation on an amendment to the tariff of authorised fares which can be charged by hackney carriages in Bracknell Forest.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 That the Committee**

- i) approves the revised fare chart attached at Annex B for consultation with the trade and general public, and**
- ii) requires officers to bring back a report to the next meeting on the results of that consultation.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 A complaint was received from a member of the public in June 2012 in respect of the 50% surcharge which can be charged when hackney carriages are carrying more than four passengers. An extract from the complaint is as follows:
- “I am writing to complain about a rule BFBC has put in place in respect of the amount of passengers that a taxi carries. I rang for a taxi from the Old Manor one Saturday night to go to Great Hollands via Crown Wood. The normal fare was approx £16.00. The fare for 6 passengers was £25.00. Could you please explain why there is a 50% excess charged if there are more than 4 passengers. The car was a 7 seater so could hold six passengers quite comfortably - it didn't have to do a longer journey nor did it use any more petrol. To add 50% to the fare is extortionate and I can see no reason for it”.
- 3.2 Over recent years, drivers have also raised concerns that they do not feel comfortable using the system which requires them to press a button on the meter at the end of the journey to add 50% onto the total, as this can cause disputes with customers.
- 3.3 The local meter company representatives are of the view that the use of extras on the meter (for more than one passenger) would be more appropriate rather than a percentage added to the final fare, so are supportive of the proposed change.
- 3.4 It is proposed to consult on the following changes:
- i) removal of the 50% surcharge where a vehicle is carrying more than four passengers
  - ii) addition of an extra charge of 50p per passenger when the vehicle is carrying more than 4 passengers.
- 3.5 This would provide additional income to cover the increased purchase and running costs on the larger vehicles. If it were to be set at a lower number of passengers then costs to users would increase especially on shorter journeys where 3 or 4 people share a taxi.

#### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Members may choose to reject the proposal or vary the amended fare chart prior to the consultation.

#### **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The existing fare chart can be found at **Annex A**. These are the maximum fares that can be charged; there is nothing to prevent a driver charging a lower fare.

- 5.2 The TPI Unmet Demand Survey carried out in 2009 highlighted that a common reason given by the public for not using taxis is the cost, and officers are keen to establish whether changes to the tariff could result in benefits for both taxi owners and the travelling public.

- 5.3 The 50% surcharge was originally implemented when the Council brought in the policy that all hackney carriages would be required to be wheelchair accessible. The proposal put forward by the trade was that the larger vehicles cost significantly more to purchase, run and maintain and that there would be more wear and tear on the vehicle. It is also accepted that where a larger vehicle is used, it can save the consumer money in that all passengers could travel in one vehicle rather than two and would also reduce vehicle emissions.

- 5.4 However, there is also a counter view that it is the driver's choice to purchase the larger vehicle and that this still does not justify the 50% surcharge, especially for longer journeys. Also, at the time that the wheelchair accessible policy was introduced, the drivers were forced to purchase the larger vehicles as there were no smaller commercial options available. Of the Borough's 84 hackney carriages, 31 are of the larger style which are able to hold more than 4 passengers.

- 5.5 Research has been carried out into the fares charged by surrounding local authorities. To date, it has only revealed one other local authority (Wokingham) who have a similar surcharge when the vehicle is carrying more than four passengers.

- 5.6 The other surrounding local authorities either have no extra charge at all, or they use 'extras' on the meter 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 - 21p per additional person

Some authorities have a maximum 'extras' charge per journey of £1.00. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Guildford also have a £1.00 fee for advance bookings.

- 5.7 Any proposed changes would have to be advertised in a local newspaper for a period of not less than 14 days and, if objections are received and not subsequently withdrawn, these would have to be considered by the Committee. It is not proposed to advertise the proposed changes in a local newspaper at this stage of the process as this would be a consultation process, the results of which would be brought back to this Committee for consideration.

#### **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

##### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The legal implications are identified within the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 There are no significant financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 There are no implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are no implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

**7 CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Not applicable at this stage.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 The recommendation requires a consultation which will be directed towards the taxi trade and the general public.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Any representations received will be reported back to the Committee at its next meeting.

Background Papers

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976  
Town Police Clauses Act 1847

Contact for further information

Laura Driscoll, Licensing Team Leader - 01344 352517  
[laura.driscoll@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:laura.driscoll@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

Doc Ref

G:\TSTANDRD\Licensing\Committee\2012\201210\Hackney Carriage Surcharge.doc