

**TO: LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
1 MAY 2013**

**HACKNEY CARRIAGE SURCHARGE
Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report brings back to the Committee the results of a consultation process agreed at the meeting on 11 October 2012 and seeks approval for a change in the Hackney Carriage surcharge as stated in Annex A.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 That the Committee agrees

- i) the revised tariff chart attached at Annex A, and
- ii) the proposed tariff charges be advertised, and
- iii) objections received within 14 days of the publication of the advertisement be reported to the Committee at its meeting on 4 July; or
- iv) if no objections are received the new tariff will come into effect on 1 July 2013.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The surcharge in its present format was introduced by the Committee at its meeting on 4 July 2002. It is the officer view that the market circumstances and rationale for its introduction have changed significantly since that date and it is no longer a proportionate or appropriate level of charge.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The status quo could be maintained or another alternative option considered and implemented. The recommendation in the view of officers provides a process which delivers a suitable level of recompense for Hackney Carriage owners and can be operated such that it is clear to customers from the outset as a charge in the manner it is applied, calculated and displayed by the meter.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 This surcharge was introduced by the Council following the introduction of the Accessible Taxi Policy requiring the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles was agreed in 2000. As part of the consultation process with the trade it was recognised that the vehicles available to Hackney owners which would meet the required Policy were the London style taxis or the large van conversions which were significantly more expensive to purchase, run and maintain than many of the saloon vehicles licensed at that time.

- 5.2 Over the last 10 years the type and variety of wheelchair accessible vehicles has rapidly grown such that much cheaper vehicles with costs in line with saloon vehicles are now available. The need to purchase a more expensive 5+ seater vehicle to meet the Accessible criteria no longer exists. If such vehicles are purchased it is a matter of choice for the owner, not a compulsion. The trend to the smaller vehicle

Unrestricted

such as the Fiat Doblo or Peugeot Partner means that now there are only 31 large van variants such as the Euro 7 or VW Shuttle Licensed as Hackney Carriages from a total fleet of 86. By 2015 this figure may, dependent upon owner choice, reduce further to 14 as vehicles reach their age limit and require replacement.

- 5.3 The present arrangements for calculating the surcharge is confusing for customers and open to fraudulent use. Many attempts have been made to find a way to present the charge in a way that is clear for customers but given the limitations of the meters fitted to the vehicles this has not been possible. We have received many complaints from both customers and the trade itself around incidents of conflict when the meter price rises by 50% at the end of the journey. The proposed recommendation would show, for say a journey carrying 7 passengers, 3 extra charges applied at the start of the journey and included in the running total on the meter. This would be clear to the customers as the price can be seen to be increasing as the journey progresses with no sudden, unexpected or questionable increase at the conclusion of the journey
- 5.4 Responses to the consultation process which was carried out between January and the 15 March and 22 responses were received. These are attached to this report as Annex B. It can be seen from the trade responses to the consultation that there is strong resistance from some to a change on a number on fronts in particular:
- (i) The additional costs of buying, maintaining and running such vehicles. There is a view expressed that the purchase was a business one where additional outlay provides greater opportunity for income due to the tariff structure. Removal of the tariff in its present form and its replacement with the one attached as Annex A it is said will make such vehicles economically unviable.
 - (ii) If such vehicles become economically unviable then their numbers will decrease and this will be detrimental to users and air quality within the borough. The rationale for this is that groups larger than four will have to take two vehicles instead of one, resulting in a 50% increase in cost and also this will increase vehicle emissions for journeys within the borough.
- 5.5 It should be noted that Hackney Carriages are not the only suppliers of vehicles available to more than four passengers. Presently Bracknell Forest has 182 private hire vehicles licensed of which 51 are able to carry five or more passengers.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 permits a Council to fix the rates of fares. Any changes must be advertised and objections considered.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Finance Officer is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from 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 Users of the service and the Hackney Carriage trade.

Method of Consultation

7.2 Use of website, Twitter and newsletters to the Hackney Carriage trade.

Representations Received

7.3 Sixteen representations received and attached as Annex B.

Background Papers

Licensing and safety Committee 4 July 2002 – Proposed Tariff increase.

Hackney Carriage Sub Committee – 17 May 2001 – Proposed Tariff increase.

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