

Decision by Portfolio Holder

Report reference: REG-002-2023/24

Date of report: 15th January 2024



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Cllr Ken Williamson


Author: David King (Ext) 4034

Democratic Services: Matt Picking

Subject: Taxi Tariff

Decision:

- 1) To agree the proposed taxi tariff as detailed 9th October 2023 Cabinet Report
- 2) To agree the review of the new taxi tariff 12 months following the implementation of the new tariff and at regular intervals going forward.

ADVISORY NOTICE: <i>A Portfolio Holder may not take a decision on a matter on which he/she has declared a Pecuniary interest. A Portfolio Holder with a non-pecuniary interest must declare that interest when exercising delegated powers.</i>	
I have read and approve the above decision:	
Comments/further action required:	
Signed: 	Date:
<i>Non-pecuniary interest declared by Portfolio Holder/ conflict of non-pecuniary interest declared by any other consulted Cabinet Member:</i>	<i>Dispensation granted by Standards Committee: Yes/No or n/a</i>
Office use only: Call-in period begins:	Expiry of Call-in period:

***After completion, one copy of this pro forma should be returned to Democratic Services
IMMEDIATELY***

Reason for decision:

On 9th October 2023 Cabinet agreed to the public consultation on the proposed taxi tariff increase and to reconsider the proposal, in light of any objections received, within 2 months of the date specified in the notice.

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

**Initialed as original copy by
Portfolio Holder:**

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. Having considered the responses received, it is Cabinet's view that the tariff detailed in the consultation, represents what it believes to be a fair increase for drivers, whilst maintaining a reasonable fare that passengers can be expected to pay. However, it acknowledged the concerns expressed by those respondents who believe the starting fare for the first mile to be too low, and it is 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. The new tariff will come into effect on 28th February 2024.

13 respondents to the consultation are in favour of the proposed increase, 6 relate 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 objection 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 agreed to disregard those comments that relate to private hire vehicle fares, as the Council has no power to regulate these fares, approximately 62% of respondents are in favour of the proposed increase, approximately 24% are of the view that the first mile is too low but otherwise supportive, 5% are of the view that the fares should increase to £5.50 for the first mile and to £0.50 for each additional 176 yards or part thereof and approximately 9% are opposed to any increase.

Overall, 91% of respondents agree that the current tariff is too low and that it should increase, the difference of opinion is by how much and what the tariff rate for the first mile should be.

The Councils fare tariff is open to legal challenge by way of Judicial Review however, the Department for Transport recommends that in reviewing fare rates, authorities should pay regard to the needs of the travelling public, with reference both to what it is reasonable to expect people to pay but also to the need to give taxi drivers the ability to earn a sufficient income.

It also recommends that to ensure that taxi tariffs reflect the costs of the trade they should be reviewed following significant changes in licensing fees and other major costs such as fuel. Regular reviews will assist drivers in maintaining their earnings and so continue to attract those seeking to become taxi drivers and provide existing licensees with greater confidence to remain in the trade and plan for future investment in new vehicles. Regular reviews also avoid large changes in fares for passengers that infrequent reviews are more likely to result in.

At the Executive Briefing on 15th January 2024, Cabinet agreed to the implementation of the proposed new tariff and agreed that the Council will review the fares again in 12 months, from the date of any subsequent change, and that they will be reviewed at regular intervals going forward. The decision was announced by the Portfolio Holder at Cabinet on 15th January 2024.

Background Papers:

9th October 2023 Cabinet Report

Table of Responses received.

Impact Assessments:

EIA has been completed and considered as part of the Cabinet report.

Key Decision Reference (Y/N): N