

## **Taxis and Private Hire Cars, Review of Tariffs**

**Report by Alan Turpie, Legal and Governance Manager**

### **Report for Decision**

#### **1 Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to determine whether to increase the amended tariff levels for taxis and private hire cars with fitted taxi meters as detailed in Appendix C.

#### **2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed amendments to the maximum tariffs which may be charged and to request the Committee to determine whether to put the new tariffs into effect.

**Date 23 August 2022**

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### **3 Background/Main Body of Report**

- 3.1** The Council, as licensing authority, is required under section 17 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 to review and fix the maximum scale of fees and other charges (“the tariff”) which may be used by taxis licensed to operate within Midlothian. The tariff will also apply to private hire cars with fitted taxi meters.
- 3.2** As part of this process, officers have met with the Midlothian Taxi Owners Association (“MTOA”) as an organization representative of taxis operating within Midlothian. During these discussions the MTOA have advised that the tariff has not been increased since 2016 whilst operating costs have increased steadily over the same period with a particular escalation in the price of petrol and diesel in recent months.
- 3.3** There is a right of appeal to the Scottish Traffic Commissioner in respect of any decision the Committee makes regarding the tariff. This may be exercised by any taxi licence holder. Guidance issued by the Scottish Government is that the Committee should consider the costs of operating a taxi as well as the income available to operators when reviewing and setting the tariff. The Committee should also avoid restricting any increase based on concern about the impact on passengers.
- 3.4** The current tariff is attached as Appendix B to this report. The fee varies depending on time of day, distanced travelled and waiting time. There are particular tariffs for the Christmas and New Year period and additional fees for a range of items, including the cleaning of the taxi.
- 3.4** The proposed tariff is attached as Appendix C to the report. The principle changes include:
- The initial charge at tariff 1 is increased to £3.00
  - The initial charge at tariff 2 is increased to £3.80
  - Tariffs 3 and 4 have been merged to form a single tariff 3
  - The initial charge at tariff 3 is proposed at £4.50
  - The additional distance/waiting time charge has been increased to £0.25 per unit at tariffs 1 and 2 and £0.40 at tariff 3.
- 3.5** As stated above, the tariff sets out the maximum charges which licensed taxis may charge for journeys within Midlothian, it would remain open to the operator to charge a lower fee if they so wished.
- 3.6** At its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> March, the Committee considered the amended tariff levels and agreed that these be put out to public consultation. The proposed tariff were therefore sent to the taxi and private hire trade and a consultation exercise carried out on the Council’s website. The consultation exercise closed on 15<sup>th</sup> August and the results are detailed below.
- 3.7** 41 responses were received from the consultation with the trade. Of these responses, all bar one supported an increase. The public

consultation through the website was, however, less supportive. 195 people responded to the question of tariff levels, the high level breakdown of the responses is as follows:

Feedback on tariff proposals	Total responses
Should be increased to levels higher than Annex B (please specify in comments box below)	13
Should be increased to levels lower than Annex B (please specify in comment box below)	6
Should be increased to the levels at Annex B	49
Should remain as currently set at Annex A	127
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>195</b>

A more detailed note of the responses to the trade consultation and public consultation are contained at Appendix D and Appendix E respectively.

**3.8** The Committee is asked to determine the tariff level for 2022/23.

#### **4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)**

##### **4.1 Resource**

There are no resource implications arising from this report.

##### **4.2 Digital**

There are no digital implications arising from this report.

##### **4.3 Risk**

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

##### **4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)**

This report does not recommend any change to policy or practice and therefore does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

##### **4.5 Additional Report Implications**

See Appendix A

#### **Appendices**

**Appendix A – Additional Report Implications**

**Appendix B – Existing Tariff**

**Appendix C – Proposed Tariff**

**Appendix D – Consultation Responses – Trade**

**Appendix E – Consultation Responses – Website.**