
ANNUAL TAXI FARES REVIEW 2019/20

Report by Service Director Regulatory Services

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

20 August 2019

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the recent public consultation undertaken in connection with the statutory review of the current scale of charges for taxi fares.
- 1.2 The Council as Licensing Authority is required in terms of Section 17 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 ("the Act") to review the scales for fares and other charges in connection with the hire of a taxi at intervals not exceeding 18 months of the last review.
- 1.3 A report on the consultation with the taxi trade was presented to the Councils Executive on 16 April 2019. That report recommended a proposed increase in current taxi rates of 3.7% and that rate was determined by the application of the Council's established process/formula.
- 1.4 Following the Executive's decision agreeing to the recommended increase of 3.7%, the Act requires the Council to undertake a public consultation on the newly proposed rates. This report requires members to consider the responses received to the public consultation.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee :**
 - (a) **Consider the responses received.**
 - (b) **Determine whether the proposed increase of 3.7% remains appropriate.**
 - (c) **Consider the percentage increase, if any, to be applied and thereafter agree that taxi operators are written to in accordance with the terms of Act and informed of the Council's decision.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scottish Borders Council, as Licensing Authority is required under Section 17 of the Act to review and then fix scales for fares and other charges at intervals of not exceeding 18 months from the date the last scales came into effect. The current scales came into effect on 19 March 2018.
- 3.2 At the Council's Executive meeting on 16 April 2019 a paper was presented that reported on the consultation with the taxi trade and it was agreed that the public consultation required in terms of the Act would propose that taxi fares will increase by 3.7% in 2019/20 and a further review of taxi fares would be undertaken within 18 months.

4 TAXI FARES; OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC

- 4.1 When reviewing taxi fares the Council must undertake two separate consultations: (1) taxi operators (completed and reported on in the paper to Executive Committee 16 April 2019) and (2) a public consultation which will allow other interested parties to make comment.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Act the Council is required to advertise proposed changes to taxi rates in the local Press for a minimum period of one month. Notices were posted in the relevant press publications on 20 and 21 June 2019.
- 4.3 In addition to the statutory requirement to advertise the proposed new tariff in the local press, the formal consultation was undertaken using the Council's Citizen Space tool and was available from 20 June 2019 to 22 July 2019. Responses can be viewed in Appendix 1.
- 4.4 A total of 12 people responded to the consultation:
- 6 identified themselves as taxi users
 - 3 identified themselves in the "other" category
 - 3 identified themselves as either taxi drivers or operators
- 6 responders indicated that no change be made to existing taxi rates, 3 responders indicated that the 3.7% increase to current rates be applied and 3 responders chose to offer comments not relevant to the purpose of the consultation.
- 4.5 Elected Members are reminded that the proposed 3.7% increase they approved for consultation at the meeting on 16 April 2019 was as a result of the application of the Council's established formula. The last increase applied to taxi rates was made in 2014/5 - see Executive Report 16 April 2019 section 3.4 for details).

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs to the Council, other than Officer time in the reviews and possible appeal to the Traffic Commissioner, attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The Council does have a statutory duty to consider reviewing taxi fares within 18 months of the previous review and therefore may risk a legal challenge and reputational damage if it does not comply with this requirement, thus this report and its recommendations for risk mitigation.

5.3 Equalities

An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and no negative impacts have become apparent. Indeed, maintaining the licence fee will lead to a positive impact for the whole community as access should remain status quo.

Equalities will need reviewed for impact if any increase recommended

5.4 Acting Sustainably

The Council has a statutory responsibility to review taxi fares within 18 months of the previous review.

5.5 Carbon Management

Taxis are a carbon consuming service. However, this fact must be balanced against the level of provision particularly in rural areas where mainstream local bus services cannot or do not operate.

5.6 Rural Proofing

Not applicable as this is not a new policy.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of the recommendations in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR, the Clerk to the Council and Communications have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Approved by

Service Director Regulatory Services Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: Executive Committee 16 April 2019

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