



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

10 November 2021

Report Title:	Review of Hackney Carriage Charges 2021/22
Cabinet Portfolio	Safer, Stronger Communities
Cabinet Member	Councillor Jeanie Bell
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
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Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	X
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	
	Be a responsible Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 authorises the Council to make or vary a table of fares for hackney carriage vehicles. This report outlines a proposal to authorise a variation of fares, the implications of a fare rise and seeks approval to commence a consultation period on this proposed increase.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) Consider the proposed variation of the fees charged by Hackney Carriages in the borough as outlined at Paragraph 4.6.
- ii) Authorise the publication of the proposed table of fares (Paragraph 4.6) for a consultation period of 14 days from the first publication of the notice during which objections may be made.
- iii) Should no objections be received, or all objections be withdrawn, then the table of fares takes immediate effect.
- iv) If an objection is duly made as stated and is not withdrawn, the council shall set a further date, not later than two months after the first specified date, on which the table of fares shall come into force with or without modifications as decided by them after consideration of the objections.

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 To seek permission from Cabinet to vary the existing fees for chargeable rates and to seek authorisation for the commencement of the legal process to vary the fees charged by Hackney Carriages.

4. Background /Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 In 2016 the Council agreed to the submission of an annual request from the Hackney Carriage providers to permit a rise in chargeable rates. This was subsequently implemented, and requests

were received and implemented in 2018 and 2019. There has been an exemption in 2020, due to the ongoing COVID19 pandemic. A request has now been received from Unite the Union and SHAPHTD, the two St Helens consuler organisations, to request an increase in the chargeable rates for 2021.

- 4.2 Hackney Carriage Proprietors are unique in taxi licensing in that they are essentially small independent business and as such have their own operational and running costs. As such fares need to keep pace with changes affecting the industry to allow those proprietors the financial means to invest properly in their business and to have a reasonable standard of living.
- 4.3 Fuel costs have been steadily increasing since 2016 reaching a peak at 136.7 per litre in October 2018. Since then, the price has fluctuated but as of October 2021 is now at 140.66 per litre and continuing to rise (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oil-and-petroleum-products-weekly-statistics>). The price of fuel is expected to rise still further due to the current national fuel crisis which will have an impact on this industry.
- 4.4 Whilst Hackney Carriages are one part of the wider taxi sector in operation in the borough, there are differences between this sector and Private Hire operators. Hackney Carriages are expected to be available on ranks throughout the day, evenings, and weekends and proprietors require the permission of the Council and a public consultation into their charges, prior to introducing a change whereas Private Hire operators can increase fares independently and without consultation.
- 4.5 Whilst this report has provided the current context in the borough, when setting Hackney Carriage fares there is no requirement under the Act for the Council to consider external factors and there is no limit on the amount of increase or variation.
- 4.6 The table below outlines the existing rates and the proposed rate revisions and indicates that the request made by the sector, if approved, would result in an 30p increase on a 2-mile journey in the borough.

Rate	Existing Rates	Proposed Rates
Rate 1 (08.01-22.59)	£2.10	£2.30
	For each subsequent 185 metres or part £0.20	For each subsequent 175 metres or part £0.20
Rate 2 (23.00 – 08.00)	£2.60	£2.80
	For each subsequent 135 metres or part £0.20	For each subsequent 130 metres or part £0.20
Rate 3 (Bank Holidays)	£3.50	£3.70
	For each subsequent 130 metres or part £0.20	For each subsequent 125 metres or part £0.20
Waiting Time (Rates 2 & 3)	£0.10	£0.10
	Fouling/Soiling the Taxi	£25.00

		No Change
	Additional Luggage	£10.00 No Change
	Recovery of Toll Charges	Where Applicable

4.7 All 359 authorities are ranked and published in order of expense based on a 2-mile journey, with St Helens being in position 308 at £5.40. The proposed new rate of £5.70 would reposition St Helens at 248 which is the same position as Warrington borough.

4.8 The request for the increase in rates has been made by Unite the Union and SHAPHTD. This request has been subject to a trade ballot of all members who agreed to the level of fare increase.

5. Community Impact Assessment

A Community Impact Assessment has been completed and identified that this proposal is positive in relation to supporting the local small business community of Hackney Carriage Proprietors. The Impact Assessment also highlighted that the provision of this sector is important to residents with disabilities as part of the wider accessible transport network.

6. Consideration of Alternatives

6.1 The alternative option for the Council would be to refuse the proposed increase in fares or to amend the fares to an appropriate level. The implications of the alternative options are outlined within the Risks section of this report at 8.10.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The variation to the chargeable rate of Hackney Carriage Fares is considered proportionate and Cabinet is recommended to approve the request and authorise a 14-day period of public consultation.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1972 Section 65 permits the fixing of Hackney Carriage fares by the Local Authority.

8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

8.3 Social Value

This proposal will help small business to continue to operate with charges at a reasonable level to enable revenue generation to sustain their businesses. The borough currently has 67 hackney carriages, 62 of which are based in St Helens, with 4 from the City Region and 1 from Greater Manchester. It is important that small business is supported from a local economic perspective and ties into the Council's 'shop local' themes. The encouragement of the development of such business will contribute to a stronger local economy as part of the overall regeneration plans for the borough.

8.4 Sustainability and Environment

Whilst there are no direct implications emerging from this report, in line with the wider Council response to the Climate Emergency, further engagement will be made with this sector on the issues of the local environment and long-term sustainability of the fleet.

A separate project to support this will commence in the new year when the existing 'Improving Vehicle Standards Policy' is reviewed. This policy was initially designed to encourage newer vehicles to the licensed fleet and it has been successful. Further work will be required as we move to meet future climate change targets.

8.5 Health and Wellbeing

Hackney Carriages in St Helens are all Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles, designated under Section 165 of the Equalities Act 2010. This standard requires the proprietors to invest in their vehicles to reach and maintain this standard. These vehicles are an important part of the wider accessible transport network to assist residents with disabilities in the borough.

8.6 Equality and Human Rights

There are no direct implications.

8.7 Customers and Resident

The proposed increase would equate to a 30p on a 2-mile journey and is reasonable within the current economic climate. It is recognised that this rate has not increased since 2019.

8.8 Asset and Property

There are no asset and property implications to these propositions.

8.9 Staffing and Human Resource

There are no direct staffing and human resource implications.

8.10 Risks

8.10.1 The increase in the permitted rate will result in a cost increase to customers. The risk of refusing the rate increase would prevent taxi proprietors from recovering additional cost increases within a challenging context as the sector emerges from the pandemic and has the additional challenge of rising operational costs. This would create additional financial demands for the sector to manage.

8.11 Finance

There are no direct financial implications for the Council emerging from this report.

8.12 Policy Framework Implications

This proposal aligns with the Borough Strategy priority "Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy" in supporting local small businesses.

9. **Background papers**

None

10. **Appendices**

None