

APPENDIX A

Responses to Fees and Charges 2022/2023 Consultation

Response 1

I object to any increase in fees. I think that considering most taxi drivers in Sevenoaks are barely managing to keep a roof over their heads after having almost zero income for the past 18 months, another extortionate increase in fees and no increase to our income (in fact still currently far less than pre covid) is quite frankly disgusting. We get absolutely nothing extra every time these prices increase. Please for goodness sake stop with the annual increases and let us catch a break! The larger firms might be able to swallow these fees but you're alienating your smaller independent drivers, who are the ones who actually provide the best service to people in Sevenoaks.

Also, it really is about time Sevenoaks DC rewarded adoptees of electric vehicles for taxis. Please explain why this is the only district I know of to not do this? I personally have taken the step to drive the first fully electric vehicle as a taxi in sevenoaks (possibly still the only one) and I have not received a single benefit from it.

Private hire prices should also be in line with hackney carriage as the vehicle test is the same. The only difference is that we complete a knowledge. Our taxi meters don't even get road tested anymore yet we get overcharged for the privilege.

Back to point, this is NOT the time to increase charges, we pay over any above already. Give us a break please.

Officer comment

Many thanks to your response to the 2022/23 taxi fee consultation.

Your comments will be placed before the Licensing Committee in January 2022 for consideration.

Rewards for those proprietors licensing electric vehicles is certainly something we can take forward to the Licensing Committee for consideration and I am happy to investigate various ways of doing this further with a view to possible implementation of this at Sevenoaks District Council.

This is not something I will be able to do in time for the 2022/23 fee structure : but will look into submitting my findings to the Licensing Committee for consideration in time for setting the 2023/24 fees.

The reasoning behind the Hackney Carriage Vehicle cost being higher than that of a Private Hire Vehicle, is that this will cover any work we undertake involving the Hackney Ranks, and the Hackney Fee Tariffs.

Response 2

In these hard times I think it's very unfair that you are putting up the prices

Officer comment

Many thanks to your response to the 2022/23 taxi fee consultation. Your comments will be placed before the Licensing Committee in January 2022 for consideration.

Response 3

Inflation is less than 5%. How an earth can you justify the increases !
Hackney Driver renewal is going up from £112. To £183. An increase of 63 %
This is ridiculous profiteering. Drivers have no choice but to pay what you demand
Please provide detailed explanation of what on the face of it appear to be the outrageous increases

Officer comment

Many thanks to your response to the 2022/23 taxi fee consultation. The fee structure for 2022/23 has been based on expenditure during 2020/2021. This expenditure has been split between the different types of taxi application we either know, or predict, will be received for the service. An increased amount of work was attributed to the taxi licensing service during 2020/2021 due to the changes which needed to be implemented as a result of the introduction of new Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Standards, and it is expected that this increased workload will continue to some extent. During 2020/21 a £40,000 loss in taxi income occurred which Members agreed (at the Licensing Committee held on 2nd November 2021) would not be recovered as it was noted that taxi drivers were likely to have been financially impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and that this loss was due to extraordinary circumstances. Where fees charged result in a surplus, this surplus will be used to reduce the fees charged the following year. Please be assured that your response to the fee consultation will be placed before the Licensing Committee in January 2022 for their consideration.

Response 4

This is outrageous. How can you justify an increase of this magnitude?
The last 18 months have been testing for everyone and now just as there is a glimmer of normality in sight you propose a huge increase in license fees... I for one strongly oppose this increase.

Officer comment

Many thanks to your response to the 2022/23 taxi fee consultation. The fee structure for 2022/23 has been based on expenditure during 2020/2021.

This expenditure has been split between the different types of taxi application we either know, or predict, will be received for the service.

An increased amount of work was attributed to the taxi licensing service during 2020/2021 due to the changes which needed to be implemented as a result of the introduction of new Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Standards, and it is expected that this increased workload will continue to some extent.

During 2020/21 a £40,000 loss in taxi income occurred which Members agreed (at the Licensing Committee held on 2nd November 2021) would not be recovered as it was noted that taxi drivers were likely to have been financially impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and that this loss was due to extraordinary circumstances.

Where fees charged result in a surplus, this surplus will be used to reduce the fees charged the following year.

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Response 5

OUTRAGEOUS! Virtually no work over the past 2 years and now you want to bleed even more money out of us.

I find the scale of the increase in these fees completely out of proportion. At a time when the media are reporting just today a shortage of Taxi drivers it's easy to see why increases in fees like this are driving people away from the trade. Most drivers have just endured a lean couple of years due to the pandemic and we have all experienced a severe cut in income. Many are self employed so no furlough money from the government was forthcoming, and now with excruciating timing you announce a hike in fees way above any semblance of inflation. You will drive many drivers out of the industry. Maybe you feel there are too many taxis in Sevenoaks and that is your intention, if not do not lament in a few years time that, like HGV drivers, you suddenly find you have too few taxi drivers in Sevenoaks. With the laws of supply and demand those remaining will be able to charge a premium fee which will be to the detriment of all Sevenoaks residents that need to use a taxi service.

Officer comment

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Response 6

After looking at the fee increase for 2022/2023. The fee it self not justify the pandemic we are in ! Living cost gone up our livelihood has gone down for past two years. Each year the licensing is increasing the fee where's the write in that ! As we haven't had any increase over three years , so why should we accept the increase in fee licensing are proposing. The taxi business been down for 24th months, no one could work. Everyone part from taxi drivers are living the dream and getting paid , where people are struggling to pay rent and trying to put food on the table for the family and paying bills and many more .

Every other council round uk been help business and taxi drivers during the pandemic and we haven't had any help from Sevenoaks licensing.

We had to take on another job to put food on the table last year and doing volunteering work helping the community.

Officer comment

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was noted that taxi drivers were likely to have been financially impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and that this loss was due to extraordinary circumstances.

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It is unclear in your email where you state 'we haven't had any increase over 3 years' whether this is referring to the Hackney Carriage Tariff ?

Whilst it is for the Licensing Authority to administer any review on taxi fares, the proposed increase should come from the trade (evidencing and explaining any reasoning behind the proposal).

To date, I have not been in receipt of any proposals from the trade and would obviously urge any drivers wishing an increase to make contact with me detailing the matters to be considered.

Please be assured that your response to the fee consultation will be placed before the Licensing Committee in January 2022 for their consideration.

Response 7

Hi, council put taxi fee up every year, how about the taxi fare, the last time we had taxi fare up it was about 5 years ago.

Officer comment

Many thanks to your response to the 2022/23 taxi fee consultation.

In response, I can confirm that the most recent Hackney Tariff increase came into effect on 1st January 2019 having been agreed at the Licensing Committee held on 1st November 2018.

Whilst it is for the Licensing Authority to administer any review on taxi fares, the proposed increase should come from the trade (evidencing and explaining any reasoning behind the proposal).

To date, I have not been in receipt of any proposals from the trade and would obviously urge any drivers wishing an increase to make contact with me detailing the matters to be considered.

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Response 8

Considering what a very tough time drivers and companies have had since the beginning of covid and the ongoing drop in work levels since pre pandemic levels, increases in fees at all are a further kick in the teeth to the hard working, low earning drivers of sevenoaks and swanley. The increase of 50 % for renewals is absurd and will only help to drive more drivers away from the industry and encourage outer area private hire companies such as uber to carry on their plans to capture as much of the cash business that they can.

Officer comment

Many thanks to your response to the 2022/23 taxi fee consultation.

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Response 9

Whilst I fully appreciate that you need to cover costs increasing the fees as shown below by such an amount is untimely. The whole taxi industry has had a very difficult time over the last 18 months which has seen many drivers and companies leaving the taxi business and diversifying into other more profitable work. If we are to keep taxi's running and the public moving and safe we need to encourage drivers and operators into the industry and not put them off. Increasing some fees in excess of 30% is not going to help anyone. Just imagine the outrage if we put some of the fares up by 30%!

I feel index linked increases across the board will be far more acceptable to everyone concerned and would lead to a better more sustainable taxi businesses. Implementing these fees will result in negative press from the already less than happy taxi companies. This will only damage our industry yet further.

Officer comment

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Response 10

I would like to strongly oppose to this proposal.

As the council would be aware that since the pandemic and the lifting of lockdown, the business has been severely effected. As more and more people are working from home the business is not the same. It is a struggle to make a reasonable living income to survive.

I feel the council should be more understanding and supportive towards self-employed individuals and small taxi companies to get through this difficult

time. An increase in fees will put a huge amount of pressure on us and might put us out of business totally.

Therefore, I would appeal to the council to postpone such increase and allow individuals in this trade to get back in their feet again.

Officer comment

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Response from 44 Licence Holders

As per the email dated 4th November 2021 regarding the proposed increase of fees for Taxi and Private Hire Licesing 2022/23, on behalf of taxi drivers in Sevenoaks, we strongly object the increase in fees.

For the past year and a half, taxi drivers have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and some are still trying to make up for the losses they incurred during lockdowns. The increased fees will contribute as an additional financial burden to many taxi drivers in the local area as for many that is their only source of income. Nevertheless, driving costs are also constantly increasing with petrol and service charges becoming increasingly more expensive. That is why we believe that the Council, in addition to scrapping the proposed increased fees, should also implement new increased rates for taxi and private hire drivers.

Our proposed new rate are as follows

Charge for the first 880 yards (5/10 mile) or part thereof Pounds 4 Pence 20 Then each additional 176 yards aprox (1/10 mile) Pounds 0 Pence 30

Waiting time for each period of 1 minute Pounds 0 Pence 50

For hiring begun between 10pm and 7am (except all Bank & Public holidays)

Overall, we feel that the Licensing Department Committee proposed changes are not in the best interest of the taxi drivers in Sevenoaks.

We strongly urge you to consider our proposals

Sincerely Sevenoaks Hackney Carriage Drivers and Private Hire Drivers