

| <b>Licensing Committee Meeting</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <b>Meeting Date</b>                | 03 August 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Report Title</b>                | Review of Taxi Tariff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>EMT Lead</b>                    | Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Head of Service</b>             | Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Community Services                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>                | Johanna Thomas Licensing Team Leader                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Classification</b>              | <b>Open</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Recommendations</b>             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Members determine whether they wish there to be an increase of the maximum scale of fares for licensed hackney carriages operating within the borough (taxi tariff)</li> <li>2. That if Members do determine that the taxi tariff is to be increased that they authorise officers to proceed with the statutory consultation.</li> </ol> |

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report asks Members to consider whether they wish to instruct officers to proceed with the process to propose amendments to the taxi tariff.
- 1.2 The report provides two options for an increase to the tariff and requests that if Members are in favour of an increase they decide which option to progress or instruct officers to progress an alternative tariff of their choice.
- 1.3 This report requests that if Members agree amendments to the tariff, they instruct officers to begin the consultation process.

## **2 Background, Context and Proposals**

- 2.1 It is at the discretion of the Council as licensing authority to set a meter tariff for licensed hackney carriages.
- 2.2 Councils are not obliged to set a maximum fare for their area, they could decide instead to rely on market forces to establish the going rate and at the same time promote competition.
- 2.3 In the past Swale BC has chosen to set a tariff which represents the maximum fee that can be charged. The current tariff became effective on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and was amended to increase the soilage fee with effect from 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and is attached as **Appendix I**.

- 2.4 At an extraordinary meeting of the General Licensing Committee of 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025 it was resolved:
- (1) That the current maximum scale of fares for licensed hackney carriages operating within the borough (taxi tariff) remained, taking into consideration comments received during the statutory consultation, and the soilage charge be increased.*
- (2) That the agreement to automatically annually increase the taxi tariff based upon the National Rail fares increase be amended so this is carried out biannually.*
- 2.5 The agreement to automatically increase the taxi tariff biannually allows a proposed tariff based on the National Rail fares increase to go out to consultation but does not remove the requirement for public consultation which is a statutory requirement under Section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- 2.6 At a further meeting of the General Licensing Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 Members were asked to provide further clarity for the biannual increase and resolved:
- (4) That the biannual tariff be increased in 2026 as per the National Rail Fares increase for 2026 and not be cumulative, and this be updated in the draft policy document at Appendix I prior to formal approval.*
- 2.7 This year, for the first time in 30 years, National Rail Fares were frozen. Therefore it was not possible to propose the biannual increase as set out in the Swale Hackney Carriage (Taxi) and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025 – 2030
- 2.8 As there had been no increase to fares last year and drivers and operators are experiencing increased costs due to the political climate and in particular increased fuel costs, an increase is proposed based on last year's National Rail Fare increase of 4.9%
- 2.9 A pre-consultation survey was sent out to drivers and operators to help measure support from the trade. Swale currently has 331 drivers who are licenced to drive hackney carriages and 39 taxi operators. Licensing received 59 responses to the survey, with 42 responses in favour of and increase 15 against and 2 ambiguous responses. The survey results and comments are attached as **Appendix II**.
- 2.10 The setting of fares applies only to hackney carriages and not to private hire drivers who can charge their own rates as statute allows.
- 2.11 Any driver has the option of charging less than any tariff that is set, as the tariff is the maximum that can be charged but is not obligatory.
- 2.12 Private Hire and Taxi magazine, a monthly magazine for the trade and licensing authorities, regularly publishes a 'league table' of tariffs set by licensing

authorities (including Transport for London in relation to “Black Cabs”) from the highest to lowest based on the cost of a 2-mile journey. To assist Members the latest figures published in July 2026 relating to all Kent authorities is shown below.

| Council              | Fare at 2 miles | Year of last increase | Position in Country Wide League Table as of 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2026 |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Folkestone and Hythe | £6.60           | 2022                  | 260                                                                   |
| Canterbury           | £7.40           | 2022                  | 164                                                                   |
| Ashford              | £7.60           | 2025                  | 134                                                                   |
| Dover                | £8.00           | 2026                  | 91                                                                    |
| Gravesham            | £8.20           | 2024                  | 74                                                                    |
| Thanet               | £8.30           | 2026                  | 67                                                                    |
| Swale CURRENT        | £8.30           | 2024                  | 66                                                                    |
| Dartford             | £8.30           | 2025                  | 62                                                                    |
| Medway               | £8.40           | 2025                  | 60                                                                    |
| Tunbridge Wells      | £8.60           | 2024                  | 48                                                                    |
| Sevenoaks            | £8.70           | 2022                  | 41                                                                    |
| Swale PROPOSED       | £8.70           | 2026                  | 42                                                                    |
| Maidstone            | £9.00           | 2025                  | 22                                                                    |
| Tonbridge & Malling  | £9.00           | 2025                  | 26                                                                    |

- 2.13 Officers have prepared two proposals for the tariff increase. Option 1 keeps the amount for the first 200 yards (182 metres) of the journey (the flag) the same as per the current tariff (£3.40) and reduces the number of yards that additional fees are incurred (the 10 pence drop) to make a fare of £8.70 at 2 miles. Option 2 increases the amount charged for the first 200 yards to £3.80 and keeps the drop at the same yardage as per the current tariff. Option 2 increases that amount drivers and operators will make on shorter local journeys, but keeps the 2 mile fare at £8.70. The proposed options can be seen as **Appendix III**

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the below recommendations:

3.1.1 That Members decide whether they want an increase to the taxi tariff.

3.1.2 That Members consider whether to increase the taxi tariff as set out in Option 1 or Option 2 or by an alternative amount of their choosing.

3.1.3 That if Members agree an increase to the tariff, they authorise officers to proceed with the statutory consultation process.

## 4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Members could decide that the current taxi tariff is fair and reasonable and to leave it as it is. This option is not recommended based on the results of the survey conducted with the trade, no increase to the tariff may increase feelings of discord amongst the trade as the majority response was in support of an increase.
- 4.2 Members could decide not to set a taxi tariff at all and let hackney carriage drivers set their own fares. This options is also not recommended as could result in too much competition amongst the trade and complaints to the licensing team regarding unfair charges.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 If Members decide that the taxi tariff should be amended a consultation will run for 2 weeks from 20 August 2026 until 3 September 2026, and advertised in the local newspapers and at the Council offices in accordance with the statutory requirements set out under Section 65, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- 5.2 All Swale licensed taxi drivers and private hire operators will be consulted by way of a newsletter.
- 5.3 In accordance with the statutory requirements a date will be set and advertised by when the amended tariff will come into effect if no objections are received during the consultation period. If an objection is duly made and is not withdrawn, it will be necessary for a Licensing Committee to be arranged for Members to consider the objections and decide whether the proposed tariff needs to be modified. If this is the case the tariff must be set, with or without modifications as Member's decide by no later than 2 months after the date originally set.

## 6 Implications

| Issue          | Implications                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| Corporate Plan | <p>The service is an important regulatory function undertaken to ensure the safety of the travelling public of Swale as well as its licensed drivers.</p> <p>There are links to:</p> <p>Community - To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.</p> <p>Economy - Working with our businesses and community organisations to work towards a sustainable economy which delivers for local people.</p> |

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|                                                              | <p>Environment - To provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.</p> <p>Running the Council - Working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver in a transparent and efficient way.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Financial, Resource and Property                             | The cost of re-calibrating individual meters would be met by licensed drivers and operators.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Legal, Statutory and Procurement                             | Changes to the table of fares published by the Authority must be made in accordance with the procedure set out in s.65 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. That sets out the notification requirements and the process if unresolved representations are made to any proposed changes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Crime and Disorder                                           | The licensing role of the Council is important in improving the safety, security and welfare of the Borough's residents, visitors and business community by ensuring an adequate supply of properly licensed taxis as a safe mode of transport for the public, particularly when other public transport is unavailable and ensuring the safety of drivers.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency                 | None identified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Health and Wellbeing                                         | Some Taxi Drivers have commented that earnings are under the national living wage, an increase in the tariff may increase their earnings which could positively impact taxi driver's health and wellbeing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults | <p>Licensing regimes are largely designed to protect public safety. The DfT Statutory Standards and The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022 go even further to protect public safety, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults and these have been incorporated into this policy revision.</p> <p>Air quality is also an important aspect of protecting children and vulnerable adults and therefore imperative that the licensing of vehicles contributes to improving the air quality in the borough.</p> |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety                        | If there are any risks associated with your report and decision, then this section should be used either to outline the risks in full or to refer to the relevant section of the report. If any of the risks identified are significant, then this section should also include a summary of how you intend those risks to be managed. Further guidance and support on this section is available from the audit team. This section should also provide details of any health and                                                                                |

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|                                 | safety implications arising from the proposals in the report, including where appropriate a discussion of how risks will be managed. Further guidance on this can be obtained from the health and safety officer.                                                       |
| Equality and Diversity          | An unreasonable increase in the level of fares could be a source of resentment amongst the travelling public. Equally an unreasonably low increase or no increase could be a source of resentment amongst the trade.                                                    |
| Privacy and Data Protection     | None identified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Local Government Reorganisation | There is significant disparity between taxi tariffs set by neighbouring authorities this could be a cause for concern for the Taxi trade and the travelling public if the new Unitary Authorities implement a single tariff through out the area under their authority. |

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Current Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Fare Table – date of commencement 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025
- Appendix II: Survey Carried out with the Taxi Trade
- Appendix III: Proposed Tariff Options

## 8 Background Papers

All relevant legislation as outlined at paragraph 1.1.2 of the draft Swale BC Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy, most particularly The Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

The Minutes of the Extraordinary Licensing Committee Meeting held on 12th May 2025 [Minutes Template](#)

The Minutes of the Licensing Committee Meeting held on 14th of July 2025 [Minutes Template](#)