

RESPONSES RECEIVED DURING CONSULTATION			
TOTAL RESPONSES	SUPPORT INCREASE	DON'T SUPPORT INCREASE TO FARES	SUPPORT INCREASE TO SOILAGE FEE
6	1	5	3

TOTAL RESPONSES	SUPPORT INCREASE	DON'T SUPPORT INCREASE TO FARES BUT SUPPORTS INCREASE TO SOILAGE FEE
3	2	1

COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING CONSULTATION	
Taxi Operator 1	<p>I would like to express my view that the tariff should not increase. Swale is currently the fourth dearest in Kent, with only Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, and Malling councils charging a higher price based on a 2-mile fare.</p> <p>What has Swale got that Maidstone 7th and Canterbury 9th dearest in Kent have to make us so much dearer? Absolutely nothing No University, Colleges, or Tourists all we are doing is charging the people of Swale more money for essential transport for the basics like shopping and the train station. Since the pandemic, we have noticed a huge drop in customers coming off the trains due to more people working from home. I feel that another price increase will hurt the trade as people may choose to walk because they simply cannot afford a taxi which may then cause a safeguarding issue causing people to walk late at night and under the influence of alcohol.</p> <p>We also need to be wary of Uber possibly coming to the area and undercharging Swale's licenced taxis.</p>
Taxi Operator 2	<p>I'd like to voice my dissatisfaction with the proposed taxi fare increase. This would be the third fare increase in 30 months. Whilst the November 22 increase was overdue, imposing an annual increase in line with rail fare inflation is detrimental to our trade. Swale is not the most affluent of areas and offers little in terms of bringing people to the borough, yet our fare rates rank in the top 5 in Kent! As a trade we rely heavily on customers who have a need for</p>

	<p>our service not just random fares. People with poor mobility, commuters, workers who are being punished with yet another hike. I believe this will have a negative effect on our trading ability. There has been an increase in queries for bookings not materialising due to the quoted amount, the cost is putting customers off. Working for a company that also competes for KCC contract work we are in direct competition with neighbouring boroughs who trade on different rates adding further pressure to operators.</p>
<p>Taxi Operator 3 (in consultation with their drivers)</p>	<p>Having consulted with all my drivers the following is an unanimous opinion: In consideration of the current cost of living crisis, we find it increasingly challenging to conduct trade, as customers are more frequently questioning the cost of their journeys. This heightened price sensitivity among our clientele makes a tariff increase particularly inadvisable at this time. Furthermore, we have observed a significant increase in competition from Canterbury-licensed vehicles, including Longleys, Cab Co, Cabline and Canterbury Taxis, among others. This influx of competitors has further intensified the market dynamics, making it even more critical to remain competitively priced.</p> <p>Hence, under the present circumstances, we believe maintaining our current tariff structure is essential to sustain our customer base and ensure continued business viability.</p> <p>However, we do agree with the proposed soilage limits, as we have had several occasions where a cab has been put out of action for the rest of the night, resulting in the driver losing out on wages.</p> <p>We propose a look at the tariff structure every 2 years rather than every year.</p> <p>We appreciate your understanding and consideration in this matter.</p>
<p>Taxi Operator 4</p>	<p>I have my concerns about the increase in fares. We are already finding a large number of customers think the fares are too high as it is and another increase is just going to make this worse. The fare pricing needs to be a middle ground where the taxi</p>

	<p>firms are able to make a profit whilst at the same time, being affordable to the general public. In Swale we have never needed to offer discounts as standard on fares and I am seeing it arise across the borough, especially in Sittingbourne. The Taxi fares should not be so high that we feel we have no choice but to discount the fares. The whole point of a council governed fare rate is so that the general public don't get "ripped off" and have a standardised rate no matter the taxi they get into.</p> <p>The part I do agree with is the increase in maximum soiling charge. The cost to clean vehicles has gone through the roof. I don't know if people would be willing to pay up to £100 however for bad soiling incidents but the ability to do so would be very useful.</p> <p>I know you're probably not going to have enough responses to stop this increase from happening but I hope you can take this feedback into account to rethink the yearly price increase.</p>
Driver 1	<p>I would like to formally express my support of the proposed fare increase,</p> <p>My reasoning is that along with the rail fares all of our operating costs are increasing, fuel, insurance, servicing costs, tyres to name just a few & the increase will assist & help us keep up with the increasing business expenses</p>
Driver 2	<p>Good morning Mohammad, am just contacting you regarding the proposal to increase fares. I would disagree with this proposal, but agree with soiling charge increase.</p> <p>It's getting harder to trade on a number of different levels, there are a lot of canterbury cars coming into our patch which seem to be cheaper than us, also the last fare increase really had a detrimental effect on trade, even now when people ask for a quote they say it's far too expensive, especially long trips like airport jobs or hospital jobs.</p> <p>Only last evening i quoted for a Q. E. Q. M. Job, reduced it by over a fiver and was still hit with multiple answers of way too expensive.</p> <p>I'm mostly on day shift at tariff 1,so it's worse after 11pm at tariff 2.</p>

COMMENTS RECEIVED AFTER CONSULTATION END (1 st – 10 th April)	
Driver 3	<p>Today the national living wage increases to £12.21 an hour.</p> <p>I would like you to consider this before dismissing our fare increase.</p> <p>It is already very difficult for us to earn anywhere near that.</p> <p>If we don't have an increase in fares, we are effectively taking a pay cut as our overheads continue to rise.</p> <p>That is totally unacceptable and will ultimately lead to the demise of the taxi trade.</p> <p>I hope you do the right thing for us.</p> <p>2nd email</p> <p>I feel that probably the people that have objected to the fare increase are the same people who didn't want to change their meters last year.</p> <p>The reason being that the company would have to pay to have the meters changed, but would gain nothing because the work that they do is all pre quoted contract work.</p> <p>If the drivers do any work outside the contracted work they are given, they keep 100% of the fare so the company owner gains nothing from a fare increase.</p>
Taxi Operator 5	<p>In 2022 it was agreed that fares would increase, as set out below. In the attached letter (Screen shot of the table of amendments for the revised Swale Taxi Policy, currently out for Consultation), the increase was set to increase by 4.9% the National Rail increase as agreed back in 2022. Please could you provide me with the minutes of the meeting where it was decided that this decision was being revoked, and going back to a public consultation on the fee increase.</p> <p><i>Amended</i></p> <p><i>5.1.1 Fare rates are automatically increased annually, and the increase is based upon the National Rail fare increase, subject to the required statutory consultation. This approach provides certainty to the taxi trade that there will be an increase to the tariff and also consistency for the travelling public that the fare increase will be in line with the National Rail increase which is based on CPI other than</i></p>

	<p><i>when government has deemed that a differing increase is appropriate. The fares will not normally be reviewed more than once a year unless there are exceptional circumstances which would justify a further increase, for example a particularly sharp increase in petrol/diesel prices.</i></p> <p>2nd email So we're basically back to where we were before when there was no increase for years. The reason that the change was made and to be inline with the rail network, was in order to make it fair and something that could be relied upon. One assumes then that as so many people disagree with the train fare rise that that won't go ahead either. If the regulation put in place is going to be overturned there's little point in putting it into policy in my opinion. Imagine Council Tax being put out as a consultation process and everyone objected to the 2.96% precept increase, and KCC increase of 4.99%, would the raise still go ahead.</p> <p>Apologies for my frustration however my understanding of the fare increase being put in line with the rail increase and it being annual was to take away the previous uncertainty. The next bottle of milk i purchase, should I object to the price as it's gone up substantially? Donald Trump is rapidly bringing the world into recession, prices are going up all over the place, yet the funds to make those purchases stay static, which is effectively a reduction in fares.</p> <p>Let's hope the committee accepts that a commitment was made in 2022, and sticks with it as opposed to baying down to the voters.</p> <p>Wasn't it Margaret Thatcher who said "This lady is not for turning" she had the courage of her convictions.</p> <p>Please pass my thoughts to the committee, prior to their meeting to discuss. Considering we currently in a Purdah Period, a decision which should have been implemented on March 1st will be delayed for in excess of 2 months, will the deficit in any fare increase be covered by Swale? Again a question for the committee.</p>
Driver 4 (Telephone call)	Expressed opinion that it is hard to make a living as a taxi driver in the current economic

	<p>climate and increasing the fares will make it harder as people will stop using taxis, or use them less frequently if the prices are increased.</p> <p>Would like the increase to the soilage charge as cannot get the vehicle interior cleaned for £50 and does not cover loss of earnings</p>
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