

# Public Agenda Pack



Notice of Meeting of

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITIES**

**Wednesday, 10 April 2024 at 10.00 am**

**John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE**

To: The members of the Scrutiny Committee - Communities

Chair: Councillor Gwil Wren  
Vice-chair: Councillor Dawn Johnson

Councillor Simon Coles	Councillor Dawn Denton
Councillor Andy Dingwall	Councillor Lance Duddridge
Councillor Pauline Ham	Councillor Susannah Hart
Councillor Edric Hobbs	Councillor Andy Kendall
Councillor Kathy Pearce	Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey
Councillor Wes Read	

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For further information about the meeting, including how to join the meeting virtually, please contact Max Perry [democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk).

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This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A: Access to Information.

The meeting will be webcast and an audio recording made.

Issued by (the Proper Officer) on Tuesday, 2 April 2024

# **AGENDA**

**Scrutiny Committee - Communities - 10.00 am Wednesday, 10 April 2024**

**Public Guidance Notes contained in Agenda Annexe (Pages 5 - 6)**

**Click here to join the online meeting (Pages 7 - 8)**

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

## **2 Minutes from the Previous Meeting (Pages 9 - 18)**

To approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

To receive and note any declarations of interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The other registrable interests of Councillors of Somerset Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes: [City, Town & Parish Twin Hatters - Somerset Councillors 2023](#) )

## **4 Public Question Time**

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

We are now live webcasting most of our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, please see details under 'click here to join online meeting'.

## **5 Work Programme (Pages 19 - 22)**

To discuss the work programme.

To assist the discussion, the following documents are attached:-

- (a) The Committee's work programme
- (b) The Committee's outcome tracker

Please use the following links to view the latest Somerset Council Forward Plans and Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions that have been published on the Council's website:

[Somerset Council Forward Plans](#)

[Somerset Council Executive Forward Plan](#)

## **6 Glastonbury Festival Verbal Update**

To receive the update.

## **7 Devolution of Services Verbal Update**

To receive the update.

## **8 Community Services Budget Monitoring (Month 10) (Pages 23 - 28)**

To receive the report.

## **9 Taxi Fares - Tables 2024 (Pages 29 - 78)**

To consider the report and make any recommendations to Executive.

## **10 Octagon Theatre - Capital Programme (Pages 79 - 82)**

To consider the report.

## Guidance notes for the meeting

### Council Public Meetings

The legislation that governs Council meetings requires that committee meetings are held face-to-face. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers (report authors and statutory officers) to attend in person, along with some provision for any public speakers. Provision will be made wherever possible for those who do not need to attend in person including the public and press who wish to view the meeting to be able to do so virtually.

#### Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at [democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) or telephone 01823 357628.

They can also be accessed via the council's website on [Committee structure - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

### Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

### Minutes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

### Public Question Time

If you wish to speak or ask a question about any matter on the Committee's agenda please contact Democratic Services by 5pm providing 3 clear working days before the meeting. (for example, for a meeting being held on a Wednesday, the deadline will be 5pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting) Email [democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) or telephone 01823 357628.

Members of public wishing to speak or ask a question will need to attend in person or if unable can submit their question or statement in writing for an officer to read out, or alternatively can attend the meeting online.

A 20-minute time slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. Each speaker will have 3 minutes to address the committee.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with many people wishing to attend the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

### **Meeting Etiquette for participants**

Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.

Mute your microphone when you are not talking.

Switch off video if you are not speaking.

Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)

If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.

There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

### **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

### **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording, and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting.

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Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee - Communities held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Wednesday, 14 February 2024 at 10.00 am

**Present:**

Cllr Gwil Wren (Chair)

Cllr Dawn Johnson (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Simon Coles

Cllr Dawn Denton

Cllr Pauline Ham

Cllr Susannah Hart

Cllr Edric Hobbs

Cllr Kathy Pearce

Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr Martin Lovell

**In attendance:**

Cllr Liz Leyshon

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

**Other Members present remotely:**

Cllr Andy Kendall

Cllr Norman Cavill

Cllr Caroline Ellis

Cllr John Hunt

Cllr Frances Nicholson

Cllr Sue Osborne

Cllr Sarah Wakefield

**26 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1**

Apologies were received from Cllr Andy Dingwall (Cllr Steve Ashton as substitute), Cllr Wes Read (Cllr Martin Lovell as substitute), and Cllr Lance Duddridge.

**27 Minutes from the Previous Meeting** - Agenda Item 2

Resolved that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee – Communities held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

**28 Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 3

There were no new declarations of interest.

**29 Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions submitted.

**30 Scrutiny Communities Work Programme** - Agenda Item 5

The members discussed the items on the upcoming programme.

They queried the delays for the items Somerset Cultural Strategy and Gypsy, Romani, and Traveller Review, and were informed that the Somerset Cultural Strategy was linked with deadlines from Arts Council Funding and had been delayed due to the funding and a clash with the Financial Emergency Work. For the GRT Review, they were informed there was an issue with staff capacity in bringing that report to the committee.

**31 Community Services Budget Monitoring Update** - Agenda Item 6

Christian Evans, Strategic Manager – Finance and Business Partnering, gave a presentation on the month 9 budget monitoring report, which provided the latest budget position from December 2023. It gave an overview of the overall council position and the position in Communities specifically, with a predicted underspend of £300,000.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- What does the future look like for rough sleeping and homelessness if demand escalates and government funding increases? *The future is uncertain and pressures are increasing.*
- At a previous meeting, there was an anomaly in the budget that was impossible to remove – now there is a £300k underspend. How have we closed that gap? *We have managed that income within the service. We are not currently delivering to the normal standard we would expect. There is a*

*cost pressure next year around that. A lot of work has gone on to balance all those figures and reduce those pressures.*

- This directorate is under the least pressure finance wise but has had to do as much work as everyone else to save money – thank you for all the hard work.
- Are you hopeful the budget will squeeze further? *Some income generation items like the crematorium are demand led, it is difficult to predict. If we do find other savings there may also be other costs.*
- Housing and homelessness that are reliant on government grants – what happens if we aren't able to fund statutory services? *Homelessness is a statutory obligation, and also demand driven, so we will see a rise in overspend if there is demand on that.*
- Which budget headlines are statutory and which aren't? *It's not as simple as saying a service is or isn't – some services are blended, with statutory elements and enforcement actions. We will bring back a breakdown of which subsets are statutory.*

The committee noted the report.

## **32 Open Spaces Briefing - Agenda Item 8**

Jonathan Stevens, Head of Operations, Regulatory, and Operational Services, and Sarah Dowden, Service Director – Regulatory and Operational, gave a presentation on open spaces, detailed the amount and different categories and how their maintenance was organised.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Is there a mapping exercise and will councillors be approached to identify areas that are frequently missed or usually need chasing? *Yes, we need to know that – we are trying to compile lists of areas which keep getting missed.*
- It would be helpful to have clarity on which areas are highways' responsibility and which are open spaces, as it would minimise duplication of conversations. *We are trying to move away from work between this was district, this was highways. We are working on that.*
- It would be helpful to have communication and clarity around devolution. *We need to get that right – it is easier for bigger towns like Bridgwater with a new area, whereas smaller towns and parishes might be more difficult. We need to move our internal mapping system and get it online for councillors and public to see. This is a devolution challenge we have on the list to work through.*
- When equipment becomes unsafe, what is the council's responsibility for replacing anything? Who is responsible for defective equipment in a play

area? *If it's our park, we stop people from accessing unsafe equipment. There's no statutory duty to replace, but our play inspectors and supervisors will look at what things like a broken slide etc. can be replaced with. There is a budget for replacement parts. If it's a park that has been devolved that will fall to that town or parish council.*

- A list of which equipment is being replaced and dealt with would be helpful. *We have a long term plan in terms of which equipment is being replaced in ten or twenty years. In the past we have written to councillors about plans for replacing equipment in the next year, and this was helpful. The savings proposal CMS029 will pause the replacement of defective play equipment in 2024/25 unless externally funded by S106 or CIL agreements.*
- How do spaces stay in the system that are mapped? Community work around that would be great, if people want to rejuvenate open spaces or little parks.
- How are new developments dealt with? *We are closely aligned with planning services, and S106 and CIL funds help with that. With the restructure, we want to have someone who works between Open Spaces and Planning. When we take on open spaces, we need to make sure the trees have had surveys, it's safe, and we can afford it.*
- A play area in one area with a broken see-saw that was removed – we were told there was no money for a replacement. Surely there is CIL money from Taunton. All of the CIL money in Somerset Council is tied up in larger projects, while Taunton Town Council has money for smaller council, and because this park is owned by Somerset Council it can't be done. There are already barriers in place to this work. *CIL is very oversubscribed – most of the money in Somerset Council goes towards replacement schools and school placements. There are statutory requirements for education that are high priority. Unless there is a specific allocation towards offsite leisure, there isn't CIL allocation that we can call upon.*
- Long grass causes complaints from public – dog poo that is difficult to pick up and then children playing get it on their shoes, and the public don't understand why long grass is happening. *We are still learning about managing these concerns about long grass, we are only 3 or 4 years into the long grass programme.*
- The public see 'No Mow May' as an excuse not to do anything. *No Mow May has a positive message underlying it, and it does not literally mean no mowing – we still mow some areas. If we can provide the correct information, it would be helpful to have councillors to advocate for this. Please look up the Somerset Grass Management Strategy, as it explains this.*
- Many trees were planted for the Jubilee, and many of these were lost in the drought. Can we have assurance that they will be watered when needed? People are cross that public money went to planting trees and then they die. *We lost 50% of the trees planted. The survival rate is usually around 75%,*

*Exmoor National Park Authority aim for 90-95% but they put a lot of resources in. We do water the trees, accessing some grants to allow us to employ people to water trees. We did plant a lot more saplings, they are cheaper so if we lose some we can replace them and they catch up to specimen trees.*

- Hedges over a footway are not cut and even when it is owned by a private owner, highways don't ask them to cut it. There is an issue around public perception and the council doing nothing. Hedges around open spaces are also an issue. When is it acceptable and not acceptable to cut a hedge? When there are issues around bird nesting season etc? Where is the rub between wildlife and public safety? *Concerns from residents are understandable – we have only been able to reduce our budget by not doing things, and there are consequences for not doing things. People can see that things are not being done that historically have been done and that's what they are used to. We do avoid hedge trimming in bird nesting season, which is March to September currently, but may change due to climate change.*
- Financial constraints meaning that damaged play equipment can't be replaced – can you assure us damaged equipment will be removed as it's unsafe? *Yes, unsafe equipment is removed or it may be protected in situ so it can potentially be updated in later years.*
- Could you provide a list of which play areas can't be replaced so that we can seek alternate funding for this work?
- No Mow May – Why is May chosen? Isn't it weather dependent? Doesn't it cause greater work in June and beyond as there is a backlog to deal with? *We do still cut grass in May, we don't stop everything. We have moved to an annual programme of cutting.*
- 50% tree loss statistic is shocking, and shocked that 25% tree loss is standard and acceptable. Could we have information on trees and make people responsible for them? *With trees we can look at 'friends of' groups and working with the public.*
- Do play areas and equipment on new build estates, do they get automatically adopted to us? Do they have to be built to a certain standard? Do we also adopt the grass maintenance around them? *It's mixed. Traditionally we would inspect it and they would put it up for adoption. More recently, development companies have paid their own maintenance and are putting them up for adoption at the end of the period, they may charge rent for maintenance and development of those areas. We are adopting less and less public open space. We do adopt highways.*
- Road adoption on estates – there are estates where roads are not adopted, where they are 39 and 20 years old. I am given to understand that they are not made to the correct standard so they cannot be adopted. There are potential problems there. *Developer must put it up for adoption, and do it to a*

*certain standard, and pay a commuted sum for its maintenance.*

- This doesn't resolve the issue of the roads. *There is limited control over that process, it is the developers land and they are liable for it.*
- It would be useful to get communities more involved in e.g. friends groups for open spaces. How would we go about that to get them more involved, or is that for town and parish councils? *There are options around parish stewards and how they could work.*
- Could we get open spaces to be added to the highway stewards job description? *We are not aware of the detail of the highway stewards pilot running in LCNs, and we don't want to dilute that role.*
- On this issue of mapping – there are lots of separate map services. TPO on one map, listed buildings on another. A single map service which could have different overlays would be helpful to the public, with for example footpaths and issues with footpaths being added. *Now that all the districts and highways are linked, we are working on this as a project. It is a larger piece of work that sits outside Regulations and Operations/Communities. We would be happy to update you.*
- Road standards must be part of the planning permission of the estate, is it an issue of planning enforcement? *Planning laws and highways laws don't meet. We don't have the ability to enforce on highways, sports pitches, etc.*
- How far is devolution of open spaces assets proposing to go? *Because of the financial emergency, we are engaging with any towns and parish councils coming forward.*
- Where do statutory and discretionary lie with regard to open spaces? *There is no statutory responsibility and there is no minimum level of maintenance beyond safety*
- Worst comes to worst – could you see a situation where open spaces are closed to the public? *If a S114 is issued, we have a credible plan to manage that budget. Could they be closed? We would have to come to an agreement on what the health and safety minimum would be for open spaces. It would depend on the approach from government.*
- Adoption of roads – what about roads that belonged to district councils but were not adopted as part of a highway? E.g. Road in Dulverton from B3322 that previously belonged to district. *All assets of historical councils have transferred to us. It would be ours under highways, and we can direct you to the right person in highways to have a conversation about it. The adoption question doesn't arise.*

The committee noted the presentation.

### 33 Growth/New Housing - Agenda Item 7

The committee received a presentation from Christopher Brown, Service Director of Housing, on the demand and supply for housing, the challenges around affordable housing delivery, and the local pressures.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Right to Buy – is there evidence of who is buying? Anecdotally, it may be an elderly couple who have children that have become affluent and buy the house for their parent or parents? Presumably it only goes in the name of the tenants, do we have a handle on how often that is the case? An awful lot of ex-council houses are let privately, do we know how much that happens and if there's anything we can do? *Once something has purchased for right to buy, the council doesn't have any control, aside from where the council is still the leaseholder. It is difficult to get data on this.*
- Is there a current pressure from developers not doing affordable housing because they only get 15% profit? *Planning applications have dropped significantly and have been held there because of the phosphates challenge. It's easier to develop elsewhere as they don't have to invest in phosphate solutions. There are also issues around skilled labour effecting developers. 15% profit is the benchmark for a requirement to make social housing. Developers are squeezing their budgets and they are the ones evidencing their costs as they offer the development so that does impact development of affordable housing. Planning would be better to go through that.*
- Pop up housing – does the HRA have a stock of land it can use for modular housing? *There are clusters of 8 units, that are low energy/net zero carbon. They are appropriate for garage sites and single story buildings, so we can continue to use the available HRA garage sites for small developments. There aren't large pockets of land to build larger schemes. We are looking at a model with Adult Services with Corporate Assets – where we are selling a lot of land, can we identify some of that which could be put to a different use and save us revenue funding. If we put 60 houses on it, it would be a huge offer. Half of it would be a good offer for providers. Where land can be put into the pool, it needs to be large enough for developers to make a profit. We were talking last week with Homes England, Adults, and Childrens, and Homes England have asked if we would like some money to investigate these sites. Larger schemes will take several years as they are complex joint ventures.*
- Pressure on rough sleeping budget – when does the money come out, when is the next tranche of money due? *The current funding for rough sleeping will run out at the end of 2025. There is a budget for 24/25, and will be putting a new bid in to the government in the summer. We would expect some funding*

*to continue.*

- *Is the 405 based on this? No, it is based on planning applications that we expect to be completed.*
- *There are questions around the viability of the notional profit – 15% 30 years ago, now 20%. They pay a lot of money for land and everything else gets squeezed out. The government should get a handle on this.*
- *Occasionally there is a philanthropic landowner who comes forward with land under market rate to facilitate housing. Clearly a registered provider must come forward to do it. Are we able to consider being a registered provider to take those on at below market rates? Yes, we can consider purchases of S106. Number of housing associations/registered providers are not interested in small development. We do have providers who are interested in rural provision. It's more helpful if the providers purchase these properties, as the council only has so much money it can use. For S106 activity, there may be a discounted price but we can't use our 40% grant. Building with grant funding can be more affordable. We have to think about where S106 fits in the strategy for the Housing Revenue Account. There are also alternatives to property being maintained as a social rented property – we prefer that, but if we may lose the property, we have the option of discounted market sale.*
- *Reducing the number of people on the waiting list – two components to this challenge, the first is more properties, and the other is churn. How many properties come vacant every year? Up to 10% churn per year. Hopefully we are all living longer, that churn may be steady and not increase. There will still be a challenge with that churn, and as we deliver longer there will be extra needs. We are hoping for additional funding with Hinkley Point C for potentially another 4 years, which may lead to initiatives like downsizing which can be successful. We want to make the best use of our accommodation.*
- *Where a parent dies and there is a child of a tenant, this doesn't reduce the waiting list. Sometimes the child of a tenant has a right of succession, but that doesn't necessarily mean that property, if the needs are different they may have right of succession to a different property.*

The committee noted the report.

### **34 Review of Street Cleansing and Groundcare Operations - Agenda Item 9**

The committee resolved under 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting, on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, within the meaning of 12A to the Local Government Act 1972:



Reason: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**(The meeting ended at 12.48 pm)**

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**CHAIR**

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## Scrutiny Communities Work Programme 2023-2024

Meeting date	Agenda item	Officer name/Job title	Service Area
Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 10am - Deane House	Gypsy and Traveller review update		Housing
	Somerset Cultural Strategy	Liz Dawson, Service Director Cultural Services	Cultural Services
	Community Services Budget Monitoring		
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2024 at 10am - Deane House			

### Forward Plan Items from the 24/25 Budget:

- Quarterly updates on devolution progression and delivery of various communities services and assets to Parish and Town councils
- Quarterly updates on the progression and delivery of income generation proposals with relevant Parish and Town councils to deliver the target value to avoid cessation of the CCTV service
- Quarterly updates on the delivery of the devolution of specific assets to Yeovil Town Council regarding CMS020 – Yeovil Recreation Centre, CMS022 – Octagon Theatre , CMS 038 – Westlands Entertainment Venue.

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Agenda Items	Lead/Owner	Agreed Outcome	RAG Status
<b>13 December 2023</b>			
Glastonbury Festival Scrutiny Report	Dave Coles	Report to return to Scrutiny next year Continued updates on discussion with Glastonbury Festival	
Rough Sleeping Initiative Overview	Chris Brown	A members briefing on rough sleeping initiative strategic work	
<b>14 February 2024</b>			
Community Services Budget Monitoring Update	Christian Evans	A request for a breakdown of which areas of the budget are statutory	
Open Spaces Briefing	Jonathan Stevens/Sarah Dowden	An update on the work around mapping the open spaces and areas the council maintains	May sit outside communities/regulations and operations

Completed	Action complete and will be removed from tracker for next meeting
Pending	Action on-going or plans in place to address.
Incomplete	No action currently in place with a minimum of 3 months since action agreed.

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Somerset Council  
Scrutiny Committee  
– 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

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## 2023-24 Budget Monitoring Report

Lead Officer: Jason Vaughan, Executive Director Resources and Corporate (S151)

Author: Christian Evans, Head of Business Partnering

Contact Details: [Christian.evans@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Christian.evans@somerset.gov.uk)

Executive Lead Member: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Division / Local Member:

### 1. Summary

- 1.1.** Month 10 budget monitoring has been reviewed in full at the Corporate and Resources Scrutiny on the 7th March 2024. This report provides details of the Communities Services extract of the full budget monitoring report.

### 2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** Scrutiny is asked to consider: -

- a) If there are any general comments or observations that they would wish to make to the Executive on the reports.
- b) If actions set out in the report are appropriate, and if any further actions should be included in the report.

### 3. Budget Monitoring Report

#### **Community Services**

Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Executive Director: Chris Hall

Service Directors:

- Housing: Chris Brown
- Culture: Elizabeth Dawson
- Customers: Jan Stafford
- Regulatory and Operational: Sarah Dowden

**Table 1: 2023/24 Community Services as at end of January 2024 (Month 10)**

- 2023/24 net budget £36.3m, projected favourable variance of £0.7m, favourable movement of £0.4m from month 9.

Service Area	Original Budget £m	Current Expenditure Budget £m	Current Income Budget £m	Current Net Budget £m	Full Year Projection £m	Month 10 Variance £m	A/(F)	RAG Status	Movement From Month 9 £m
<b>Housing</b>									
Housing Strategy	1.3	0.5	(0.2)	0.3	0.6	0.3	A	Red	0.3
Housing Options	4.6	7.4	(2.4)	5.0	5.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Housing Enabling	0.0	0.7	(0.2)	0.5	0.5	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Private Sector Support/ DFG's (SIP)	0.0	0.9	(0.4)	0.5	0.5	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Displaced Person Service	0.0	0.8	(0.8)	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Other Costs & Income	0.0	0.1	(0.1)	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
<b>sub total</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>(4.1)</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Red</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Customer Services</b>									
Customer Services	7.0	6.8	(0.7)	6.1	6.0	(0.1)	(F)	Green	(0.1)
Somerset Lifeline	0.0	2.2	(2.4)	(0.2)	(0.2)	0.0	-	Green	0.0
<b>sub total</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>(3.1)</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>(0.1)</b>	<b>(F)</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>(0.1)</b>
<b>Cultural Services</b>									
Library Service	3.8	5.1	(0.7)	4.4	4.1	(0.3)	(F)	Green	(0.4)
Heritage Service	1.7	1.7	0.0	1.7	1.7	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Leisure - Sports Centre	2.0	2.6	(0.5)	2.1	2.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Museums	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Theatres	0.5	3.4	(2.4)	1.0	0.4	(0.6)	(F)	Green	(0.2)
Visitor Centres	0.1	0.3	(0.3)	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Tourism	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	-	Green	0.0
(wellbeing) Community Grants	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
<b>sub total</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>(3.9)</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>(0.9)</b>	<b>(F)</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>(0.6)</b>
<b>Regulatory &amp; Operational Services</b>									
Registration	(0.2)	2.1	(1.9)	0.2	(0.1)	(0.3)	(F)	Green	(0.2)
Environmental Health	4.2	4.6	(0.3)	4.3	4.3	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Bereavement Services	(1.2)	1.1	(2.3)	(1.2)	(1.1)	0.1	A	Red	0.2
Harbours	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Ports	0.0	0.2	(0.1)	0.1	0.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Street Cleansing	5.0	6.0	(0.9)	5.1	4.9	(0.2)	(F)	Green	(0.0)
Open Spaces	3.1	6.8	(3.5)	3.3	3.6	0.3	A	Red	0.3
Public Conveniences	0.0	0.6	(0.2)	0.4	0.3	(0.1)	(F)	Green	(0.1)
(wellbeing) Community Safety	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
CCTV	0.7	0.8	(0.1)	0.7	0.9	0.2	A	Red	0.0
Licensing	0.0	0.8	(1.1)	(0.3)	(0.3)	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Resorts	0.0	0.4	(0.2)	0.2	0.2	0.0	-	Green	(0.1)
Coroners	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.3	1.3	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Operational Support	0.0	0.7	(0.1)	0.6	0.6	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Scientific Services	0.0	0.4	(0.4)	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	(0.1)
<b>sub total</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>(11.1)</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>(F)</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>
<b>Community Services Total</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>(22.2)</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>(0.7)</b>	<b>(F)</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>(0.4)</b>

### Community Services - key explanations, actions & mitigating controls

The four directorates in Community Services have been working to minimise general fund expenditure throughout the year, this has helped cover pressures that have emerged post combination of budgets on vesting day, and helped to provide financial support to the council's overall budget overspends.

The current in-year underspend has increased from the month nine report which is an overall positive message, but this has not happened without consequences. We have held off works that would usually have been completed, and deferred maintenance where it is not a statutory requirement or needed to meet a health and safety need.



## Housing

Currently we are identifying a £0.3m variance in the general fund Housing service. The finance team have undertaken considerable work in Culture and Customer Services which has brought clarity to those budgets. This detailed work has yet to be completed for the Housing service and we therefore we have less clarity in this area.

There continue to be significant challenges within the year relating to demand, which is being offset by additional Government grants to support homelessness and other housing initiatives.

The Housing Options service has seen increased use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and increased reliance on agency staff. Actions are being progressed by the service to mitigate these additional costs in the future through improved process and structural change. There is also an increase in demand for the service due to flooding and winter pressures. Although the service has a core council budget of £4.9m the service has significant grant income increasing its budget to over £9.5m. The significant spend pressures are:

- Additional spend of **£0.960m** projected in respect of homelessness.
- **£0.270m** additional spend in respect of rough sleeping.

The **£1.230m** additional costs are to be fully funded by government grants which are ringfenced to this service area.

The Housing Enabling and Housing Strategy services are expected to generate a small budget saving by quarter four due to in-year staffing cost savings and income from grant and fees, as mentioned above this has yet to show itself in the figures as more in depth work is needed to ensure all the budgets are correct and allocations to budget are accurate.

The Displaced Persons Service is 100% grant funded and will break even with underspends carrying forward to support the service in 2024/2025.

The Private Sector Support/SIP service is anticipated to break even whilst also being able to reduce its fee income from Adult Social Care for 2023/2024 by £0.3m.

## Cultural Services

There is an anticipated underspend in respect of Theatres which is due to additional income from ticket sales for the performances at the Westlands Entertainment Centre, in addition there are expected underspends on premises budgets. This is generating an

overall underspend of £0.6m, an improvement of £0.4m from month nine, due to better anticipated income from the final pantomime performances.

The previously reported pressures in respect of Leisure – Sports Centres have been covered by savings on other budgets within this service.

Library services are showing a projected underspend of £0.3m, this is a slight reduction on the reported position at month nine.

### Regulatory & Operational Services

Open spaces functions were previously carried out by the district councils, these include services such as grounds maintenance. The service is reporting a total adverse variance of £0.3m. This in part relates to a significant reduction of budgeted income associated with the loss of income from a ground's maintenance contract provided by the council to an external client. The contract ended in 2021/22. The service expenditure budget was reduced as part of the budget setting process, but the income budget was not reduced to reflect the change. Therefore, this income target remains and cannot be achieved. A pressure has been approved for 2024/25 to amend this income budget estimate from April. Additional work is underway in year to reduce the impact of this. In year open spaces has postponed spend and made use of a one-off reserve to help mitigate the pressure.

Bereavement services is presenting an under recovery of income against the budget of £0.1m this is due to lower than budgeted from year to year and throughout a given year.

The authority provides a CCTV service across the county. The service has additional costs in 2023/24 at over £0.2m. This is in part due to expenditure from 2022/23 that was not accounted for in the correct year creating a one-off pressure in 2023/24, alongside other variations which are being reviewed. Work is underway to mitigate this, and we aim to reduce it from the current reported £0.2m overspend by year end. It is unlikely at this stage that the full overspend can be mitigated.

These pressures are, in the main offset by a favourable variance at £0.2m for the Registration service which has had more income, a demand lead service so income can vary. Alongside this the Street Cleaning service currently has an overall net favourable variation of £0.2m being a combination of some extra external income which sadly ends in 2023/24 and other variances which are being worked through.

### Customer Services

Customer Services are currently showing a projected underspend of £0.1m from a position of a balanced outturn last month. Work continues to confirm the outturn position for the Lifeline Service.



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## Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/23/--/--

Decision Date – 08/05/2024

Key Decision – no



**Somerset**  
Council

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### Fixing of hackney carriage fares

Executive Member(s): Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture

Local Member(s) and Division: N/A

Lead Officer: John Rendell, Licensing Manager/Specialist

Author: John Rendell

Contact Details: 01823 219491, john.rendell@somerset.gov.uk

### Summary / Background

1. Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (here on abbreviated to the 'LG(MP)A76') gives the Council the power to fix the maximum fares that hackney carriage vehicles (more commonly referred to as taxis) may charge for distance and time within the district. When a council sets maximum charges, it publishes them as a 'table of fares'.
2. There are currently four different taxi fare 'zones' due to the Council inheriting one from each of the four predecessor councils. The Licensing service is seeking to replace these with one table of fares so that the maximum fares are aligned across the Council's administrative area.

### Recommendations

3. Having considered the objections against the proposal, the Executive resolves to adopt the recommended table of fares shown at **Appendix 1**, so that it may come into effect on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.

### Reasons for recommendations

4. Any table of fares is a maximum rate that can be charged, leaving room for customers to negotiate lower fares and competition in the marketplace. Therefore, the fares customers pay will vary to some degree. Be that as it may, a single table of fares for Somerset will ensure that what drivers can charge and earn, and that what the travelling public pay, is as consistent as possible.
5. The recommended table is a version of the table originally published on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January (**Appendix 2**), with modifications made by the Licensing Manager/Specialist in recognition of the key themes contained within objections that were received during the objection period. In summary, it seems more appropriate to gently uplift the maximum across the four zones into one standard

maximum, giving drivers the freedom to increase their charges if they wish, rather than force them down in places.

6. The recommended table would result in an uplift to the maximum taxi fares that can be charged across all of the existing four zones, almost without exception. This is fairer to the taxi trade than the other options, explained below.
7. Bringing the table of fares into effect on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May (rather than immediately) will allow the taxi trade time to have their taxi meters re-programmed. This is the latest date a new table may come into effect, given the time constraints of section 65 of the LG(MP)A76.

### **Other options considered**

8. Resolving not to adopt a new table of fares would mean the four tables of fares fixed by the predecessor councils would continue to have effect. Maintaining four tables of fares and reviewing them independently would naturally be less time and cost efficient for the service and for the taxi trade, since the Council would seek to recover the costs through licensing fees and charges that the trade pay. The Licensing Manager/Specialist does not believe that the differences in four former districts are not significant enough to warrant maximum fares as different as they currently are.
9. Resolving to adopt the table of fares originally published (**Appendix 2**), would result in notable decreases to the maximum that taxi drivers in the Somerset West and Taunton zone can currently charge, in particular on Saturdays and for vehicles capable of carrying above five passengers. This is mentioned in many objections and is noticeable in a comparison of taxi costs, explained in further detail below. If concerns raised in the objections are realised, this could result in a reduction of larger capacity vehicles licensed as taxis, particularly in the Somerset West and Taunton area, where drivers would earn less for large groups than they currently do.
10. The Executive may resolve to adopt a variation of Appendix 1 or Appendix 2, with modifications of their choosing. Providing this resolution was made prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2024, there would not need to be further consultation.
11. Any resolution to adopt a new table of fares (with or without modifications) must be made at the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May to meet the requirements of 65 of the LG(MP)A76.

### **Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

12. 'A greener more sustainable Somerset' is a priority in the Council plan. Having "...an effective public transport system that meets the needs of more of our residents..." is identified as being an integral part of the Council's drive to net zero.

13. The Council has a certain balance to strike when fixing the fares that taxis charge. If those fares are set too high, then it is no longer affordable for many of the people who rely on them in some way or another. If those fares are set too low, drivers and operators will struggle which, in turn, would eventually negatively impact on the availability of taxis in the local area. The purpose of the recommendations in this report is to harmonise the maximum fares for the benefit of the wider taxi trade and travelling public.
14. The decision recommended in this report would have no bearing on the medium-term financial plan.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

15. The Council is able to charge fees for determining applications for taxi and private hire licences, and these fees may cover certain reasonable costs, such as those incurred as a result of reviewing and fixing/varying a table of taxi fares, including the cost to publish a public notice. The Licensing service has calculated fees with the aim of achieving full cost recovery.
16. There are no other financial implications.
17. This report does not relate to any risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register.

### **Legal Implications**

18. There are no legal implications, but it should be noted that the fixing of taxi fares is an Executive function (and not a Council/Licensing & Regulatory Committee one) because it is not identified alongside other hackney carriage and private hire licensing functions in Schedule 1 of The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.

### **HR Implications**

19. None.

### **Other Implications:**

### **Equalities Implications**

20. An equality impact assessment has been carried out; attached as **Appendix 3**.
21. In summary, the impact on the majority of protected groups is neutral. Since the harmonisation of maximum fares is likely to result in an increase in the costs of using taxis in certain areas of Somerset (where the current maximum is less than that proposed), the impact on disability and age groups can be seen to be negative. Be that as it may, ensuring that taxi fares are regularly reviewed and

are fixed at a level which reflects ongoing changes to the cost of living and cost of running such a business (fuel, insurance etc.) is important to the health of the taxi trade. A reduction in their availability would have a negative impact on those protected groups highlighted.

### **Community Safety Implications**

22. On this occasion, the proposal is to create a new table of taxi fares so that the maximum is consistent across the Council's administrative boundary, rather than a straightforward increase to the maximum which, often occurs as a result of events like a significant rise in fuel costs. Therefore, there are no community safety implications to consider. But it should be noted that taxis play a vital role in the night-time economy by helping people to get home safely, many of whom are vulnerable or more vulnerable than they might be otherwise as a result of consuming alcohol. The Council must therefore be mindful of the way in which it regulates taxis, since a reduction in their availability in the local area would be particularly harmful to the safety of the public during the hours that the nighttime economy is active.

### **Climate Change and Sustainability Implications**

23. Taxis are an important form of public transport, especially in more rural areas where there are limited or non-existent bus and rail options, therefore it is important to the health of the taxi trade that maximum fares are fixed at the appropriate level.

### **Health and Safety Implications**

24. None.

### **Health and Wellbeing Implications**

25. None.

### **Social Value**

28. As this report does not relate to the procurement of services, there are no social value implications.

### **Scrutiny comments / recommendations:**

29. **TBC**



## Background

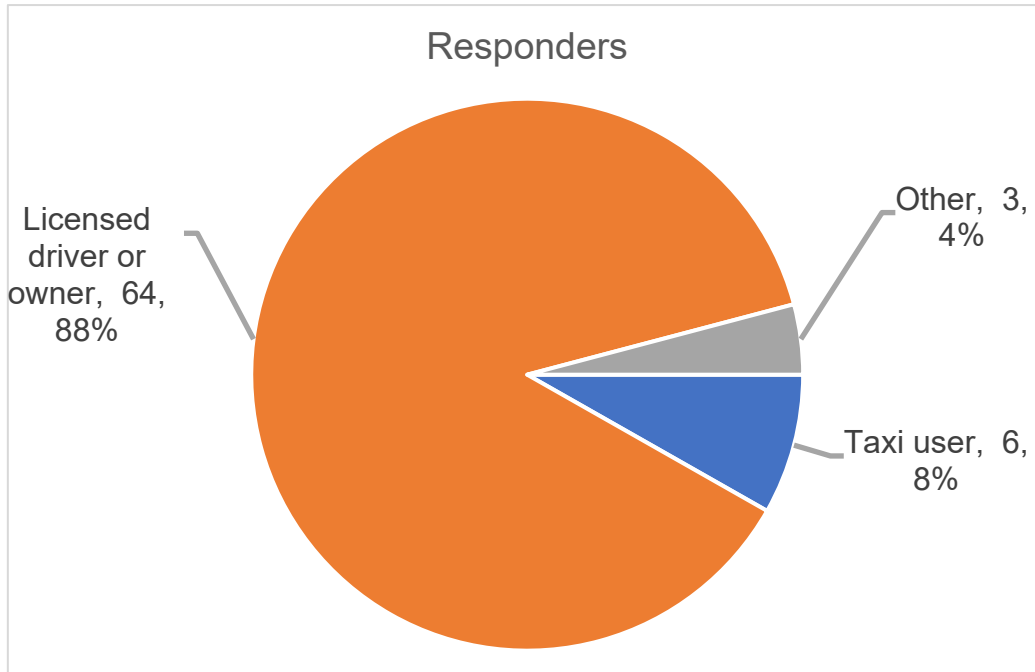
30. The cost of using a taxi largely depends on when a journey is undertaken and the distance covered. The total cost of using a taxi is referred to as a 'fare' and is calculated on an electronic meter installed in the vehicle, where it can be easily seen by passengers.
31. Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 gives the Council the power to fix the fares that taxi drivers may charge for time, distance and "*...all other charges in connection with the hire of the vehicle or arrangements for the hire of a vehicle*". A taxi driver can charge anything up to, but not more than, the fares fixed by a council. This allows for competition in the market. There is no power to fix the fares charged by private hire operators/drivers.
32. To create a table of fares, or vary an existing one, a council must publish the proposed table in a local newspaper, display it at the council offices, and allow at least 14 days for any person to object. If no objections are received, the new table will come into effect on a date which must be specified beforehand. If there are objections, a council must, within two months of the initial implementation date, consider them and decide whether to adopt the proposed table or a variation of it.
33. Tables of fares can vary dramatically from council to council, with multiple rates or percentage multipliers for different times of the day, days of the week and on public holidays. This is true of the four existing tables of fares adopted by the predecessor district councils in Somerset. These can be viewed at **Appendix 4**. No one table of the current four comes out as being the most 'expensive' when different charges for various journeys are calculated. For example, the most expensive charge for four people to travel four miles at 9am on a Monday is in South Somerset, whereas the most expensive charge for six people to travel seven miles at 1am on a Sunday is in Mendip.
34. Three of the four current tables of fares were last varied in 2022, the most recent being Somerset West and Taunton Council's, varied on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2022. The table fixed by Sedgemoor District Council is the longest to have had effect, having last been varied in 2019.
35. The cost of using taxis in different council areas is often compared by taking the price of a basic, two-mile journey. Trade publication Private Hire and Taxi Monthly (PHTM) publish a '[national hackney fare league table](#)' on this basis, with the authorities with the highest maximum featuring at the top. There are 344 separate authorities listed in the PHTM league table. Authorities that charge the same amount for the two-mile journey are not ranked jointly and are instead ranked in alphabetical order. The PHTM league table is only indicative of price differences and does not give a wholly accurate picture.
36. Using the basic, two-mile journey as an example, the tables of fares compare as follows:

Table	Price of a basic 2-mile journey	Fares introduced	PHTM table rank as of 27/03/2024
South Somerset	£7.60	July 2022	#92
Mendip	£7.10	April 2022	#159
Sedgemoor	£6.80	November 2019	#204
Somerset West	£6.80	September 2023	#205

37. Under the tables in Appendix 1 or Appendix 2, the price of a basic, 2-mile journey is £7.60. Adopting either table would place Somerset Council between 185 and 215 in the rankings.
38. [The RAC charts fuel prices](#) over the last 10 years. According to their statistics, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2022, average UK unleaded and diesel prices were at a 10 year high, with the pump price for unleaded at 191.43p and diesel, 199.07p.
39. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2024, that pump price was 144.87p for unleaded, and 153.49p for diesel. According to [charts published by the RAC Foundation](#), which use data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the cost of living went up by 16.09% between July 2022 and February 2024. Motoring tax and insurance costs went up by 124.63% and general motoring costs, by 7.69%, over the same period.
40. To illustrate the difference between the existing tables of fares, the cost of travelling two- and five-mile distances at different times of week is shown at **Appendix 5**. These fares demonstrate what the cost would be if the maximum fare for the given distance were charged. It should be noted that in practice, fares for those distances can still differ if a taxi may have had to wait e.g. were it sat in heavy traffic.
41. A working group of Licensing Officers came up with the table of fares published (Appendix 2), largely blending the most commonly occurring features of all four of the existing tables resulting in increases and decreases to what can currently be charged with the existing tables.
42. A survey of taxi vehicle proprietors yielded a small number of responses, of which views were mixed. There were 23 responses to the survey in total, of which 13 people supported the proposed table, three were not sure and seven did not support it. Some concerns were raised about increasing the maximum that can be charged and how this might discourage the public from choosing to travel in a taxi. As stated before, this is a legal maximum and drivers can choose to continue charging the rates they currently do. A number of Somerset West and Taunton based proprietors also expressed concerns, given under the published table they would no longer receive a 50% multiplier on Saturdays during the day, and that the 'nighttime rate' would commence at 23:00 hours, rather than 22:00 hours as they have now.
43. To meet statutory requirements, a public notice containing the table of fares (Appendix 2) was published in the Somerset County Gazette on the 25<sup>th</sup> of

January. This marked the beginning of an eight week public objection period (although 14 days is the statutory minimum). Notices were also displayed at council office buildings in Bridgwater, Shepton Mallet, Yeovil and Taunton.

44. 75 objections were received. For full details see **Appendix 6**.



45. There are a number of themes running through objections made against the published table (Appendix 2). The recommended table includes modifications made as a result of some of these key themes.

***Leave the four tables as they are.***

46. As has already been explained, the maximum that taxi drivers can charge in Somerset is not consistent and this does not seem fair to the travelling public or licensed trade.
47. Keeping and maintaining four separate tables of fares for different parts of Somerset would be less efficient for the Council, and more costly to the licensed trade as a result.

***The proposal would be too much of an increase.***

48. As Appendix 5 shows, the maximum that could be charged under the published table is, in certain circumstances, less than it is currently. Given the increase to the cost of living and motoring costs since July 2022, described at paragraph 36, the uplift recommended as per the table in Appendix 1 is considered to be reasonable. Most importantly, it is a maximum that can be charged and the trade are free to charge their customers lower rates.

***The cost of the first mile will put customers off or be unaffordable.***

49. This was a theme which was also naturally present in the objections from taxi users. It is important that the maximum rate of fares is set to a level that ensures that working as a taxi driver is a viable occupation. The fares must enable drivers to earn a living and not just cover costs.
50. The recommended table has £4.60 for the first mile and 30p for each completed one tenth of a mile, or part thereof. This is the same as the table previously adopted by South Somerset Council in August 2022, and which is still in effect in the South zone at this moment in time.
51. Taxis may seem an expensive way to travel for many people, but it should be remembered that they are a form of public transport provided to the hirer on their own terms, capable of picking up them up and dropping them off at a place of their choice, unlike buses and rail travel.

***Restricting drivers to charging £2 for every passenger above the first four will not cover the costs of running larger vehicles e.g. an 8 seater multi purpose vehicle (MPV), and will result in a reduction of their use and availability.***

52. This is mentioned by 33 separate objectors.
53. The £2 charge per passenger (after the first four) appears generous when the cost of a short fare is calculated, but is less so the longer the distance driven. Drivers in the Somerset West and Taunton area in particular objected to this aspect of the published table as their fares are currently multiplied by up 100% ('double time') for journeys involving four or more passengers.
54. Taking into account those objections, the recommended table features 'non-standard tariffs' i.e. multipliers, for journeys involving above 4 passengers.

***Drivers should receive +50%/'time and a half' on Saturdays as well as Sundays, as is currently allowed with the Somerset West and Taunton table.***

55. This is mentioned by around 43 separate objectors.
56. Examples numbered 5, 6, 15 and 16 in Appendix 5 demonstrate how Somerset West and Taunton drivers would be notably impacted were the new table of fares to omit a multiplier/non standard tariff for daytime on Saturdays. In the case of example 16, the difference for a 5 mile journey would be £9.40 less than they can currently earn.
57. Unlike the published table (Appendix 2), the recommended table has a +50% multiplier (time and a half) for Saturdays *as well as* Sundays.

***The 'night time' multiplier should start at 22:00 rather than the 23:00 proposed, as this is currently allowed with the Somerset West and Taunton table.***

58. It doesn't seem unreasonable for the 'night time' multiplier to commence at 22:00 as requested by 8 separate objectors, to ensure a general uplift rather than a decrease.

### Background Papers

59. None.

### Appendices

1. Table of fares recommended for adoption
2. Published table of fares
3. Equality impact assessment
4. Existing tables of fares
5. Comparison of taxi costs under tables of fares
6. Objections

### Report Sign-Off

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	
Communications	Peter Elliot	
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	
Workforce	Dawn Bettridge	27/03/2024
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	26/03/2024
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Chris Hall	
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	26/03/2024
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Smith-Roberts	
<b>Consulted:</b>		
Local Division Members		
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Andy Dingwall Opposition Spokesperson for Communities, Housing and Culture	26/03/2024
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Gwil Wren for Scrutiny Communities Committee	

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## Appendix 1: Table of fares recommended for adoption

This table is a modification of the table originally published and, to demonstrate how it differs from that table, features that have been changed or removed have been marked through with a line.

<b>Standard tariff:</b>	
First mile	£4.60
For each completed 1/10 of a mile or part thereof	£0.30
<b>Waiting time:</b>	
Each completed 2 minutes	£1.00
<b>Non-standard tariffs (only one per fare):</b>	
Monday to <del>Saturday</del> Friday between <del>23:00</del> 22:00 and 07:00	+50%
Saturdays and Sundays all day	+50%
In excess of 4 passengers, Monday to Friday between 07:00 and 22:00	+50%
In excess of 4 passengers, Monday to Friday between: 22:00 and 07:00	+100%
In excess of 4 passengers, Saturdays and Sundays all day	+100%
Public and Bank holidays, all day (inc. Christmas Day)	+100%
Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, from 18:00 to 00:00	+100%
<b>Extras:</b>	
In excess of 4 passengers, per extra passenger	£2.00
Soiling charge	£100
Toll/clean air zone charges	As per charge incurred

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## Appendix 2: Published table of fares

<b>Standard tariff:</b>	
First mile	£4.60
For each completed 1/10 of a mile or part thereof	£0.30
<b>Waiting time:</b>	
Each completed 2 minutes	£1.00
<b>Non-standard tariffs (only one per fare):</b>	
Monday to Saturday between 23:00 and 07:00	+50%
Sundays all day	+50%
Bank holidays all day	+100%
Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, from 18:00 to 00:00	+100%
<b>Extras:</b>	
In excess of 4 passengers, per extra passenger	£2.00
Soiling charge	£100
Toll/clean air zone charges	As required

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## Appendix 3: Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or [www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment)

<b>Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)</b>	Somerset Council		
<b>Version</b>	1.1	<b>Date Completed</b>	22/03/2024
<b>Description of what is being impact assessed</b>			
<p>As well as licensing taxi drivers and vehicles, the Council can set the maximum that they can charge. The main charge is normally for the distance i.e. the further you go, the higher the end fare. There are also often extra charges for time delays, when there are higher numbers of passengers and costs are also multiplied during evenings, weekends and public holidays. When a Council sets maximum charges, it publishes them in a ‘table’.</p> <p>There are currently four different tables of maximum fares in effect in each of the four, former district council areas. What customers can expect to pay and what drivers are able to earn, therefore depends on which part of Somerset they live and work. It is proposed that the Council replaces these with one table for the whole of Somerset.</p> <p>No one table of the current four comes out as being the most ‘expensive’ when different fares for various journeys are calculated. For example, the most expensive charge for four people to travel 4 miles at 9am on a Monday is in the former South Somerset area, whereas the most expensive charge for six people to travel 7 miles at 1am on a Sunday is in the former Mendip area. The proposed table of fares is not a simple increase on the current maximum across all four areas. Depending on in which part of Somerset the journey takes place, when it takes place and how many people travel, the maximum proposed is in some cases more than at present but in other cases less. The differences can be viewed in the accompany table of examples.</p>			

A working group of Licensing Officers came up with the table of fares published, largely blending the most commonly occurring features of all four of the existing tables resulting in increases and decreases to what can currently be charged with the existing tables. Were that table adopted, some taxi drivers are likely to charge those rates, meaning that members of the public may notice an increase in taxi costs. The charges in any table are a maximum that can be charged and drivers do not necessarily have to put their prices up.

This proposal doesn't target any particular group of customers. The proposed table of fares would apply to all those using a taxi, irrespective of their Protected Characteristic.

The fares will not apply to private hire vehicles.

## Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

According to Somerset Intelligence, 15.9% of households in Somerset are without a car or van for transport.

There are no available statistics on the proportion of the population as a whole, or a proportion of those who fall within any of the protected characteristic groups, that use taxis.

Three of the four current tables of fares were last varied in 2022, the most recent being Somerset West and Taunton Council's, varied on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2022. The table fixed by Sedgemoor District Council is the longest to have had effect, having last been varied in 2019.

[The RAC charts fuel prices](#) over the last 10 years. According to their statistics, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2022, average UK unleaded and diesel prices were at a 10 year high, with the pump price for unleaded at 191.43p and diesel, 199.07p. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2024, that pump price was 144.87p for unleaded, and 153.49p for diesel. According to [charts published by the RAC Foundation](#), which

use data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the cost of living went up by 16.09% between July 2022 and February 2024. Motoring tax and insurance costs went up by 124.63% and general motoring costs, by 7.69%, over the same period.

This assessment has been carried out acknowledging that taxis are an important form of public transport used significantly by the following:

- Households without a vehicle (often lower income households);
- Individuals with certain disabilities which renders them unable to drive;
- Households in areas with limited bus connections.
- Older people.
- Younger people, in relation to their access of the night-time economy.

Given the proposal is likely to result in some members of the public experiencing a rise in the cost of using taxis, it could be argued that it impacts negatively on all groups.

However, those identified above will be partly or even wholly, in some cases, reliant on taxis for transport. Therefore we believe that the cumulative negative financial impact on these groups would be potentially greater than others, due to the frequency on which they use the service.

**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

In accordance with section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, notice of the proposal was published in a local newspaper and at the council offices, with 21 days given for the public to make objections. The proposal was also advertised on the Council's social media accounts.

There were 75 objections to the original table published, mainly from the taxi trade but some members of the public too.

Objections from taxi users and the public refer to travelling by taxi being more expensive, which is more of a problem for regular taxis users and those unable to drive.

There were a high number of objections from the taxi trade, particularly those working in the Somerset West and Taunton area, expressing concerns about the maximum for journeys on Saturdays, in the evenings and for larger groups being brought down under the table published, resulting in what is effectively a pay decrease.  
Some of the taxi trade objected to say that there did not need to be increase to any of the maximum rates.

As the table of fares the council sets is a maximum rate that can be charged, this still leaves room for customers to negotiate lower fares and competition in the marketplace.

**Analysis of impact on protected groups**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
<b>Age</b>	<p>A significant proportion of older people use taxis regularly and therefore, a cost increase would have a greater aggregated negative financial impact on that group than on those members of the community who use taxis infrequently or not at all.</p> <p>Similarly, Taxis have a particularly important role in the night-time economy where younger people represent a significant proportion of users. Consequently, younger people may also experience a more significant negative impact as a consequence of higher costs.</p>	☒	☐	☐

<b>Disability</b>	Those with disabilities which mean they are unable to drive, are more likely to use taxis regularly and therefore, a cost increase would have a more noticeable impact than those members of the community who use taxis infrequently or not at all.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sex</b>	It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>Sexual orientation</b></p>	<p>It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)</b></p>	<p>It is believed the outcome will not have a significant impact on this group as a whole (although at an individual level the greater the use of taxis the greater the financial impact will be).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b></p>	<p>Households on lower income, particularly those with no access to a vehicle, and households living in rural areas with limited access to buses, are more likely to use taxis regularly and therefore, a cost increase would have a more noticeable impact than those members of the community who use taxis infrequently or not at all.</p> <p>But there will also be an impact on those taxi drivers who can be considered to be part of a low-income household.</p> <p>Adopting a new table also ensures that all taxi drivers licensed by the Council are able to earn the same rates of pay, unlike at the present time. This would help offset increases in running costs which, as already mentioned have risen significantly in the last few years.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>



### Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Recommend a modified table of fares to Scrutiny - Communities	10/04/2024	John Rendell		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recommend a modified table of fares to the Executive for full adoption.	08/05/2024	John Rendell	Periodic review of table	
Engage with the trade to review the effectiveness of the table	2025	John Rendell		

### If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Were a new table of fares adopted, some taxi drivers licensed to work in certain areas of Somerset will be able to charge more than they currently can for certain journeys.

The size of the increase that would be experienced by taxi drivers and the public alike depends on in which of the former district council areas they travel, because there are currently different tables inherited from those predecessor councils.

It is unfortunate but unavoidable that increases to certain rates in a table of fares, or the table as a whole will have more of an impact on certain protected groups, by virtue of their being more likely to use taxis more frequently than other groups. How much of an impact will depend on the following:

- how regularly an individual uses taxis.
- how far they travel and when.

- their financial circumstances.
- the parts of Somerset they routinely travel in.

But it is important that the maximum is set to a level that ensures that taxis are viable. The cost of providing a taxi service has risen significantly in recent years and, more recently the increases to the cost of living have been felt by all. Drivers in the Sedgemoor area in particular are working to a maximum that was adopted in 2019.

<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>John Rendell</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>04/01/2024</b>
<b>Signed off by:</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Equality Lead sign off name:</b>	<b>Angela Farmer</b>
<b>Equality Lead sign off date:</b>	<b>22/3/24</b>
<b>To be reviewed by:</b> (officer name)	
<b>Review date:</b>	



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## Appendix 4: existing tables of fares

<b>Sedgemoor District Council</b>	
<b>Taxi Fares with effect from May 2019</b>	
For the first 600m or part thereof £3.00	£3.00
Additional distance above 600m	20p per 140m
Waiting rate of	20p per 40 seconds
<b>Extras</b>	
Bank / Public Holidays (all day), and from 6pm Christmas Eve and New years eve until 7am the following day.	Additional 100% of proper fare
Nightwork (11.00pm to 07.00am), and all day Sunday.	Additional 50% of proper fare
All journeys with 5 or more passengers – at all times.	Additional 50% of total fare
Luggage	20p per item
Soiling Charge	£100 maximum
Tolls and congestion charges may be passed on to the hirer.	
Booking Fee up to a maximum of £20 may be added to the proper fare where a hackney vehicle is used for Private Hire use within the district.	

## Mendip District Council – effective from 00:01 hours 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

	VEHICLES CARRYING <b>UP TO 4 PASSENGERS</b> FOR HIRINGS BEGUN BETWEEN THE HOURS OF:	VEHICLES CARRYING <b>5 OR MORE PASSENGERS</b> FOR HIRINGS BEGUN BETWEEN THE HOURS OF:
<b>Tariff 1</b> For the first 522 yards: £3.20 For each subsequent 77 yards: 10p Waiting time for each completed 17.5 seconds or part thereof: 10p	<b>07:00 – 23:00 Monday to Saturday</b>	
<b>Tariff 2</b> For the first 522 yards: £4.55 For each subsequent 77 yards: 15p Waiting time for each completed 17.5 seconds or part thereof: 15p	<b>06:00 – 07:00 and 23:00 – 02:00 Monday to Sunday</b> 07:00 – 23:00 Sunday, Bank Holidays (excluding Christmas, Boxing and New Year's Day) and between 18:00 – midnight on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve	<b>07:00 – 23:00 Monday to Saturday</b>
<b>Tariff 3</b> For the first 522 yards: £5.90 For each subsequent 77 yards: 20p Waiting time for each completed 17.5 seconds or part thereof: 20p	<b>02:00 – 06:00 Monday to Sunday</b> All day Christmas, Boxing and New Year's Day	<b>06:00 – 07:00 and 23:00 – 02:00 Monday to Sunday</b> 07:00 – 23:00 Sunday, Bank Holidays (excluding Christmas, Boxing and New Year's Day) and between 18:00 – midnight on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve
<b>Tariff 4</b> For the first 522 yards: £7.25 For each subsequent 77 yards: 25p Waiting time for each completed 17.5 seconds or part thereof: 25p		<b>02:00 – 06:00 Monday to Sunday</b> All day Christmas, Boxing and New Year's Day

Extras:

Soiling - caused by vomiting, urinating, defecating or excessive spilled food or drink. A charge of up to £100 dependent on cost to remove.

Tolls and congestion charges – A charge not exceeding the charges incurred whilst conveying passengers may be passed to the hirer.

Banking – Only where legally permitted, a charge not exceeding the charges incurred may be charged per transaction where a credit/ debit is used to pay for the hire. (This will not apply to transactions with both banks based in the UK/ EU).

Note: For journeys of 5 miles and over – the continuance distance after 5 miles is 80 yards per meter increment – not 77 yards.

**South Somerset District Council**

**Taxi Fares with effect from August 2022**

<u>Tariff One</u> – Applies 06.00hrs to 23.00hrs Monday to Saturday.		<u>Tariff Two</u> – Applies 23.00hrs to 6.00hrs Monday to Saturday and all day Sundays.		<u>Tariff Three</u> – Applies to All English Bank Holidays and from 18.00hrs until midnight Christmas Eve & from 18.00hrs New Year’s Eve until midnight.	
If the distance does not exceed one mile: For the whole distance	£4.60	If the distance does not exceed one mile: For the whole distance	£6.90	If the distance does not exceed one mile: For the whole distance	£9.20
If the distance exceeds 1 mile: For the first mile	£4.60	If the distance exceeds 1 mile: For the first mile	£6.90	If the distance exceeds 1 mile: For the first mile	£9.20
For each 1/10 of a mile or uncompleted part thereof after the first mile	30p	For each 1/10 of a mile or uncompleted part thereof after the first mile	50p	For each 1/10 of a mile or uncompleted part thereof after the first mile	60p
<b>FOR WAITING, THE CARRIAGE BEING STATIONARY</b>					
For each period of 2 minutes or part thereof			£1.15		
<b>EXTRA CHARGES</b>					
Soiling of vehicle			Up to £100		
Passengers in excess of four (for each additional passenger)			£1.15		
Use of boot for luggage, shopping, prams and bikes			£1.15 per item		
Pets, birds and animals per cage/animal			£1.15 per item		



**Somerset West and Taunton Council**  
**Maximum Permitted Taxi Fares – Valid from 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022**

<b>Standard Fare</b> if the distance does not exceed 390 yards	£2.40
<b>If the distance does exceed 390 yards:</b>	
For the first 390 yards	£2.40
For each completed 135 yards or part thereof	20p
<b>Waiting Time</b> for each completed period of 35 seconds	20p
<b>Other charges</b>	
For hiring's commencing between 10pm and 7am	+ 50% of the Standard Fare
For Saturday & Sunday	+ 50% of the Standard Fare
For all Public and Bank Holidays	+ 100% of the Standard Fare
Christmas Eve and New Years Eve from 6pm	+ 50% of the Standard Fare
More than 4 Passengers at any point during the hire	+ 50% of the Standard Fare
More than 4 Passengers between 10pm and 7am	+ 100% of the Standard Fare
More than 4 Passengers Saturdays, Sundays, Bank/Public holidays	+ 100% of the Standard Fare
<b>Soiling Charge</b> (caused by vomiting, urinating, defecating or excessive spilled food or drink)	£100

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## Appendix 5 - Comparison of taxi costs under tables of fares

Example no.	2 mile Journey at:	No. of passengers	Sedgemoor	Mendip	South Somerset	Somerset West & Taunton	Published table - Appendix 2	Recommended table - Appendix 1
1	9am on a weekday	Up to 4	£6.80	£7.10	£7.60	£7.20	£7.60	£7.60
2	9am on a weekday	6	£10.20	£10.40	£9.90	£10.80	£11.60	£11.40
3	10pm on a weekday	Up to 4	£6.80	£7.10	£7.60	£10.80	£7.60	£11.40
4	10pm on a weekday	6	£10.20	£10.40	£9.90	£10.80	£11.60	£11.40
5	2pm on a Saturday	Up to 4	£6.80	£7.10	£7.60	£10.80	£7.60	£11.40
6	2pm on a Saturday	6	£10.20	£10.40	£9.90	£14.40	£11.60	£11.40
7	1am on Sunday	Up to 4	£10.20	£10.40	£11.90	£14.40	£11.40	£11.40
8	1am on Sunday	6	£13.60	£13.70	£14.20	£14.40	£15.40	£11.40
9	6pm on Bank Holiday	Up to 4	£13.60	£10.40	£15.20	£14.40	£15.20	£15.20
10	6pm on Bank Holiday	6	£17.00	£13.70	£17.50	£14.40	£19.20	£15.20

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Example no.	5 mile Journey at:	No. of passengers	Sedgemoor	Mendip	South Somerset	Somerset West & Taunton	Published table - Appendix 2	Recommended table - Appendix 1
11	9am on a weekday	Up to 4	£13.80	£14.00	£16.60	£15.00	£16.60	£16.60
12	9am on a weekday	6	£20.70	£20.75	£18.90	£22.50	£20.60	£24.90
13	10pm on a weekday	Up to 4	£13.80	£14.00	£16.60	£22.50	£16.60	£16.60
14	10pm on a weekday	6	£20.70	£20.75	£18.90	£30.00	£20.60	£33.20
15	2pm on a Saturday	Up to 4	£13.80	£14.00	£16.60	£22.50	£16.60	£24.90
16	2pm on a Saturday	6	£20.70	£20.75	£19.90	£30.00	£20.60	£33.20
17	1am on Sunday	Up to 4	£20.70	£20.75	£26.90	£22.50	£24.90	£24.90
18	1am on Sunday	6	£27.60	£27.50	£29.20	£30.00	£28.90	£33.20
19	6pm on Bank Holiday	Up to 4	£27.60	£20.75	£33.20	£30.00	£33.20	£33.20
20	6pm on Bank Holiday	6	£34.50	£27.50	£35.50	£30.00	£37.20	£33.20

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## Appendix 6: objections

No.	Capacity	Reasons for objecting
1	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Leave the tables of fares as they are.
2	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	The fares are expensive enough as they are. People are always complaining about the price for longer journeys. Also there will be no incentive for taxi drivers to have multiseaters.
3	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	It's going to reduce the amount of work for the licensed taxi drivers and might increase the demand of "fake", uninsured and unlicensed "taxis".
4	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	I object to extra person charge as no where near covers the cost of a 8 seate at £90,000
5	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Saturday single rate is unfair and will cause Taunton to have less drivers as no one will want to work. £2 per passenger over 4 is also not enough. On a long journey the cost in fuel is more the £8. This will also cause Taunton to have less MPV vehicles which again is already a high demand.
6	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	This would mean a reduction in income, at a time when all drivers are struggling with increased costs on fuel, insurances and maintenance. The proposed costs for vehicles over 4 passengers does not cover the increased fuel costs of running multi passenger vehicles. At present the proposal to drop time and a half on Saturdays when most drivers can make up their income, will result in no taxis available on a Saturday. These proposals are disgraceful and ridiculous.
7	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	I'm not objecting
8	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Why should we loose time and a half on a sat or time and a half on all multi seater work havent we already objected against this

9	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>The taxi drivers of Sedgemoor are still operating on 2019 rates. In 2019, the minimum wage for an adult was £8.21 an hour. In 2024, it rises to £11.44 - around 40% higher.</p> <p>However, the costs of driving have increased by even more than that in the corresponding period.</p> <p>Why should taxi drivers, having suffered all the impact of the pandemic, and massive cost of living rises. and having waited patiently while all around were going on strike for massive pay rises, be fobbed off by this paltry increase which represents, in real terms, a decrease over the five years since?</p> <p>To my mind, the minimum fare should be set at £5 to cover the first half mile, and 40p per 1/10th should then be charged. All other percentage increases for unsociable hours should increase as per the proposals.</p>
10	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I drive a vehicle that can carry up to 8 passengers. Looking at the new table if I was to carry a full load of passengers that would put the minimum flg up from £3.60 currently tariff 2 to 11.60. I appreciate this is new Maximum fare, and can be negotiated. But as I understand it taxi meters are set by council at maximum rate.</p> <p>Currently Tarriff 1 £2.40  Tarriff 2 £3.60  Tarriff 3 £4.80</p> <p>It is not clear to me is the £2 per customer per journey or per mile.</p>
11	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>Difficult enough to earn a living as it is without removing the 50% Saturday tariff</p>
12	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I have no objection to the proposed table of fares. However, I believe the omission of a 'booking fee' currently adopted by Sedgemoor DC will potentially disadvantage members of the public living in more remote or rural areas. It will, for example, not be financially viable for a taxi to drive from Burnham to Blackford to collect a passenger and take them on to Wedmore. There are probably better examples!. I would encourage the committee to consider including a booking fee of £20 maximum which would cover dead mileage and make these journeys viable.</p>
13	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>Not fair to work on Saturday on a single time</p>

14	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	I will lose money
15	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I have several objections to this proposal I shall list them below.</p> <p>1 - removing the ability to charge 50% on Saturdays is going to have a huge effect on drivers that use Saturdays to earn money to cover weekly cost when those vehicles are used in the weekdays for contract school runs, runs that might I add, are no way near meter rate due to the council awarding runs to the lowest tender price.</p> <p>2 - changing 22:00 to 23:00 for 50% extra is a complete insult to the drivers, we had had Tarif 2 from 22:00 for years, and now you want to take away more money from the drivers of Taunton. The enhanced rate of pay is an anti social time enhancement, 22:00 is classed as anti social ours. Supermarkets pay more, some from 20:00!</p> <p>The above 2 points will have such a huge effect on the ability for drivers to earn, I can promise you - they won't bother working - customers won't be able to get a taxi, people will be left waiting for cars, do the council want that?</p> <p>3 £2 extra per passenger for any over 4, have any of the licensing team ever looked into the costs of purchasing a 8 seater taxi? Or even running one? I'll answer that with a NO, it's disgusting you think that £2 extra is a fair price, I own 3 taxis, my next logical one would be a multi seater, not now, why would I bother? They cost so so so much more to run than a 5 seater car, it wouldn't be profitable, and companies will get rid of them, so customers will end up spending more of multiple vehicles, and they will be told it's the councils fault.</p> <p>We understand what the council is offering also includes a fare increase, but quite frankly we don't need it in Taunton, the prices we charge now are perfect, and the system works! The increase doesn't cover the £1400 a year you are going to lose us! Trust me, the council will notice more drivers leaving and claiming benefits and council tax benefit.</p>
16	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	My strong opinion is to keep Saturday and Sunday all day 50% extra not only Sunday
17	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I object to 2 parts:</p> <p>1.) Bank holiday 100% should be 50% as it always has been. The reason for it is that as you do far less jobs on a Sunday or bank holiday because people know it's too expensive with 50% if you would increase it to a general 100% on bank holidays I think the trade wouldn't survive the bank holidays.</p> <p>For example a fare from Shepton to Bath is on normal rate around £50 on bank holidays £75 and with the new proposed fare would be £100 personally I rather earn the £75 than no calls from customers as no one will be willing to</p>

		<p>pay £100 to go to bath.</p> <p>2.) The more then 4 people should stay on one tarif higher then it is for normal sized taxis. If you only charge extra £2 extra per person it becomes financially unviable for investing in 6 or 8 seaters in the future as with the bigger cars are higher maintenace costs attached.</p> <p>If you go with your current model I would propose extra 50% from current tarif.</p> <p>Looking forward to hear back or I would be happy to attend the meeting.</p> <p>Kind regards Daniel</p>
18	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I agree with the fare but I am objecting fare on Saturday. Most off Hackney carriage drivers are depending on Saturday income which is +50%. Now if council changing fare on Saturday normal fare. It will impact our income. Because everything is goes up including house rent and food shopping in this circumstance this is gonna be impact our income and our family. Most of us already struggling. So fare is ok but only Saturday all day fare should be like Sunday.</p> <p>Thanks.</p>
19	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I wish to object to more than one element of the proposed new tariff but the main objection will be to the loss of one hour of time and a half for each evening and for all day Saturday. If this goes ahead then the loss to both drivers and owners would be catastrophic. We would not only lose the increases proposed but also a considerable amount of our last increase , which we waited for over 11 years to receive</p>
20	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>Happy with the new rates. I think it needs to show that a booking charge can be made when the company has to travel outside its area and has dead mileage to cover.</p>
21	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>After having spoken to many licensed drivers in Taunton, the general concensus is that, there will be very few, or no hackney vehicles working on any Saturday daytime due to the removal of the +50% tariff. Most, if not all MPV type vehicles are likely to be relicensed as PH vehicles, also due to the removal of the ability to charge +50% in excess of 4 passengers. This will also remove many wheelchair accessible vehicles, as PH vehicles are not required to be wheelchair accessible. In short, before long, most "Taxis" in the Taunton area will become Private Hire vehicles, which, in fact, seems to be occurring already. This will also negate the proposed fares, as again, they are not binding to PH vehicles that have their meters removed. With many readily available driver apps, prices for fares will be calculated in real time at current, or even higher, rates.</p>



		Also, if all Somerset licensing areas are to operate on identical tariffs, there will be no valid reason remaining to stop drivers working different areas. Disallowing this, could lead to legal action, as it could be seen as inhibiting a drivers ability to earn a living. Especially as this new tariff will effectively kill off the Hackney trade in this town.
22	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Life is expensive for everyone this proposal is not good at all for Taxi Drivers is already a struggle to be a Taxi Driver in Taunton area with the proposal will be a loss probably will see less Taxis on as can't afford to be out,as Cars industry is going very high after 31April . Sow from is a big (NO).
23	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Nothing against the new fare proposal, but is there any chance we could look into excluding taxis in paying clean air charges around the UK. Adding £9 to a journey to Bristol and £12.50 to heathrow every trip makes it a lot of money the customer is paying on top of the usual fare.
24	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I am not objecting in its entirety, just expressing a view . I believe that the evening rate should remain at 10.00 pm as prior .</p> <p>The soiling charge should be at the discretion of the driver to an extent and should state Soiling Charge 100.00 or as invoiced for extreme soiling. For instance, in an extreme case, if dashboards or seating needs to be removed, 100.00 would be inadequate .</p> <p>I feel that it is unfair to the taxi rank drivers to state that rates could be negotiated down as there would be regular dutch auctions at the rank with clients trawling the cabs to get a cheaper rate for a £6.00 fare . For longer distances yes . So the fair rates need to be set so that the customer and driver are both happy for journeys under say 10 miles .</p> <p>Saturdays could be either left as +50% as prior or +25% as a happy medium .</p> <p>As one of the few mobility drivers, I feel that at least onboarding should be included in the fair as a lot of time is lost for the driver. I do not believe that this is discrimination, rather factual.</p>
25	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	The main reason is that I mostly work weekends and nights due to family commitments. If tariff 2 work hours will be changed starting from 11pm instead of 10pm as it is at the moment and also all day on Saturday will also be charged at tarrif 1 instead of tarrif 2 as it is at the moment then my earning will substantially decrease although I have same expenses, or maybe more looking at inflation, service, insurance, car wash prices which are only going up.

26	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>A) minimum fare increase for my older passengers which only have short journeys that would be a 30% increase as I do quite a few that only go £3:40 £3:60</p> <p>B) you will end up with no one driving multi seaters due to cost (I already know 3 drivers that got rid of multi seaters due to this being looked at). Just the fuel difference alone is substantial.</p> <p>C) if the time rate on a Saturday is dropped then I certainly won't be working it. Saturdays in the town are now dead. Ask for a set of foot fall statistics from gwr then you have some data to work with (Love to see how many people would work weekends as additional to their normal hours within the council for normal rate of pay)</p> <p>D) funny how we were all told a unity council wouldn't have an effect on taxi rates, oh here we are now.</p> <p>E) how is the waiting time going to work if you have to do a full two minutes then again that will run us at a loss as opposed to the current time.setups</p> <p>F) this is now the 3rd torrid change and this also incurred a charge each time.</p>
27	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I object to this proposal because it is affecting my earnings. Taunton during the week is very quiet.. For me Saturday tariff 2 and during the week tariff 2 starting from 10 pm works very good.</p> <p>Also people already comment and sometimes get off the taxi when they see a starting price of 3.6£..this is happening after I wait 1 h at the taxi rank.. Imagine the new tariff standard starts 4.6£ tariff 2-6.9£ and bank holiday tariff 3-9.2£ This new tariff will be a trigger for bad behavior.. Even though that at the end of the journey price will be similar with what it is now.</p> <p>Many aspects that the meter to start from 0 if is possible.. Sometimes with the new tariff will start from 9.2£ You will say that this is maximum you can charge.. You can go for a lower price. Indeed.. But as I said above, each journey will be similar price or lower(each day 22:00 to 23:00 or on a Saturday) and we already struggling with prices expenses (diesel, insurance, car service).</p>
28	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>Starting the fare at £4.60 would stop a lot of people using a taxi, it is too expensive to start the journey at that cost.</p> <p>Having over 4 passengers and only being able to charge £2.00 per extra passenger is unfair. Vehicles that carry more than 4 passengers a mini bus as an example, cost more to run.</p> <p>Saturday is not part of a normal working week and as such should be normal fare + 50%, it should not be standard fare.</p> <p>I do not agree with the new fares being proposed.</p>

29	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	The omission of a booking fee fir remote fares
30	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Utter disgrace,its not like we get no complaints about the cost already in taunton,starting at 4:60 will surely put off a few of our customers who only travel shorter distances,whether elderly or disabled. Changing rate 2 not an issue,I been in the job almost 30 years,and that's how it was before. Times hard for everyone,and I believe raising starting rate will make it much harder for all us drivers,when it's already a struggle.
31	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>As an owner of an 8 seater taxi I must seriously object to the new fare proposals.</p> <p>A lot of my work comes from group bookings of more than 4 people, but not necessarily 8. Looking at the new fares I can give two examples where I am worse off. I charge £50 to go to Castle Cary Station for more than 4 people. If I take 5 plus luggage (which requires an 8 seater) I can charge a maximum of 42.60.</p> <p>If I go to bristol airport with 5 plus luggage (again, needs an 8 seater) I charge £85 plus parking. This would drop to £75.60 plus parking.</p> <p>According to the new fares a meter rate for less than 4 people is £73.60 plus parking. For me to drive around in a vehicle that does at least 25% less fuel economy and is more expensive to run with tyres, maintenance, insurance and tax, this is completely unacceptable.</p> <p>If you were to visit Glastonbury and see the state of some of the taxis there, and then I pay £33,000 for a nice 8 seater, what is the point in working if I can only charge £2 extra per person per journey?</p> <p>The fares are stating a £10 journey would then cost £18 for 8 people.....and a £100 journey would then be £108 for 8 people, where is the logic in that? This is based on having 8 in the taxi, for 5 or 6 it is almost like saying there is no extra charge for a bigger vehicle which incurs so many extra costs.</p> <p>I understand that the council are trying to bring a one fare for all of Somerset but the increases across day rates for the mendip area will lead to less people using taxis. This will mean even though drivers of 4 seaters can charge more, they will overall be worse off. I will be a lot worse that is for certain, to the point that I will sell the 8 seater or go private hire.</p> <p>In Mendip area, there is struggles for Hackney taxi drivers and this will only make the situation worse.</p> <p>I requested a quote for uber today from Bristol airport to Glastonbury, the cheapest quote from them I received was £36. The most expensive was £54.75. This is a ridiculous price and the new fare proposals will only lead to more people using uber or even unlicensed taxis.</p>

32	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	I think they are too expensive, representing an increase of over 30% on existing fares in Sedgemoor and will deter people, especially the less well off
33	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>The proposed fare at weekends will have a dramatic decrease in the number of Hackney carriage drivers available for hire. As well as night drivers, the fares in Taunton should remain as they are but I suggest you increase the flag drop.</p> <p>One fare across the entire county is mind boggling. The cost of living in Sedgemoor &amp; Taunton for example is different (you only need look at the house prices for starters). Zone pricing would be a much better idea (as it is now).</p> <p>It is no secret that Take Me formally A1 ACE Taxis are moving towards a private hire fleet, which we will be in control of our own pricing. However we still have Hackney carriage vehicles.</p> <p>The proposal for MPV vehicles is an absolute insult, these purpose built vehicles are in excess of £45,000 - they cost a lot more in fuel averaging around 34mpg in comparison to a saloon vehicle which are around £28,000 for a Skoda Octavia and averaging over 60mpg.</p> <p>The nighttime trade for taxis across the UK has taken a massive hit since we've come out of COVID. We are approximately 38% down on our night trade, the proposal for a 2300 tariff 2 will have a significant impact on drivers.</p>
34	Office manager for Fiancé's taxi company	<p>The main reason I'm objecting is the loss of time and a half on a Saturday, due to the fact that it will lose us potentially upto £2,000 a year! For a small family run business this would be a huge hit when we already pay out so much on running and maintaining the cars and business.</p> <p>Our business was hoping to buy a multi seater in a years time, but with the proposed changes it wouldn't be financially viable to run due to the higher purchasing and running costs.</p> <p>This would be a shame, not to be able to go ahead with getting a multi seater as we often have calls for bookings for larger parties that dont want to pay double to travel across two vehicles.</p> <p>I think there is a high possibility there will be a reduction to the amount of drivers/ taxis as our drivers have already voiced concerns and intentions on carrying on working Saturday daytime. As time and half currently, only made it just viable.</p> <p>I feel this would be a huge set back for all drivers - who seem to be getting the raw end of the deal.</p>

35	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	I'm a taxi driver in Taunton, during the week I'm occupied doing contract work and school runs and currently use Saturday daytime and evening to earn money to cover fuel and living cost and by loosing this additional income that time and a half pays it would severely impact the ability to feed my family and inturn impact my ability to fuel my taxi leaving me unable to fulfil my contract schools runs. I don't think the council should proceed with this proposal as it is going to severely hit our yearly income to the tune of nearly £1600+ when factoring in the proposed increase on the meter price, this doesn't even begin to cover our costs. As a new driver myself, I am currently paying over £4400 a year for insurance, happy to provide evidence of that, the weekend is my only chance to earn any profit and something of a living wage. Take away time and a half and you will ensure more drivers claiming universal credit.
36	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Saturday and Sunday and every night from 10pm till 7am price should be tariff 2. Also regarding more than 4 passengers should be 1 tariff up.  Rest of the proposed tables ok.  Thank you
37	I am someone who uses taxis	I am no longer able to drive and depend on taxis which I use several times a week. I find the present costs exorbitant an if they are increased again it will affect my life enormously as I will no lnger be able to afford to go out. I cannot use buses because of mobility problems.
38	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	People on low income and the elderly will not be able to pay these proposed rates and those who can afford it will complain . The drivers will get grief and I expect abuse and as is the case now will be called a rip off merchant. There is enough competition with fares as is it in Burnham at the moment let alone making this kind of an increase..
39	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	You will have no taxis on a Saturday i will not be working for that rate on a Saturday and will Not be running my licence. At this rate it wont be worth it
40	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	Proposed rates versus current rates:  On the standard tariff over 10 miles the customer will pay £3.60 more than currently, £36 more over 100 miles, this is a 11.5% increase. For waiting time, the customer now pays just under 50% more, from circa £20 an hour to £30 an hour. An outrageous raise!  Removing Tariff 2 in SWT on a Saturday day time will dramatically reduce the number of taxis on the road until later

that evening. This will result in demand outweighing supply and it was for this reason that Tariff 2 was introduced to the trade to increase the number of vehicles on the road for the customer.

Sundays / Bank holidays, no change, no issues.

Christmas Eve and New Years Eve proposed to go from 50% between 1800 and 0000 to 100%... Why? Neither day is a bank holiday, both are already busy evenings, why should the customer be penalised? 50% is sufficient enough.

Proposed that in excess of 4 pax, £2 per passenger to the metered fare. Lets do the maths ( tariff 3 would not be effected )

Tariff 1

running 10 miles currently for 8 pax ( max load ) £42 - proposed table of rates £36, that is a decrease in earnings of circa 15%

running 30 miles currently for 8 pax ( max load ) £120 - proposed table of rates £88, that is a decrease in earnings of circa 27%.

The licensing of MPV's is to provide a cost effective method of transport for between 5 and 8 passengers. Currently the customer saves by only having one vehicle rather than two and effectively the saving is 50% of the other vehicle. The proposed table of rates reduces the fare even more to the customer but the knock on effect to the vehicle owner is less money to pay the running costs. A new MPV costs circa £40k to £50k. The running costs are more than a 4 seater vehicle i.e. lower MPG, higher insurance due to the possibility of a life changing accident involving more casualties and more.

By reducing the income to the vehicle owner the result is easy to foresee, no operator will purchase MPV's moving forward due to the cost versus income. All current MPV's will be run to the end of their life or if an owner does purchase one moving forward it will be an older vehicle. The upshot is that operators will be running older, less safe, less environmentally friendly vehicles and the customer will have less selection to the point when they will have no selection and they suffer in the long term with having to pay more for two cars. I believe there is a lack of foresight reference MPV's.

I do understand that the council are trying to level the playing field between four former districts into a unitary table however I do not agree with the proposed table of rates. And yes, I know that these are maximum fares that can be charged and anyone can charge below.

I believe that the council are out of touch with ground level. Why were drivers / operators not engaged other than by emailed surveys. As a proprietor of over 20 years I am disappointed that operators like myself were not asked for our

		<p>opinions from the start. We have the working knowledge and operators like myself do not try and gain personal advantage but care for the trade as a whole as any decision / issue effects us all.</p> <p>To further prove the point that operators like myself are not in it for personal gain, I operate PH vehicles, so for me, I can charge whatever I want as long as it is agreed upfront, but I still feel strongly about the proposed rates. I could keep quiet or support them in the hope that the raised prices are accepted and use that to my advantage to under cut my competitors and increase my workload but these raises are not about me, it is the trade as a whole and the effect it has on the customer.</p> <p>In summary, I do not agree with the proposed table of rates for SWT drivers and operators.</p> <p>The whole country is facing a hard year financially and the proposed unitary table increases fares for customers on the SWT tariff except MPV's. Taxi fares do not need to increase! It wasn't that long ago that we received an uplift for fuel due to sudden oil price increases, the pump prices have reduced but all drivers are still benefitting from the uplift!</p>
41	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>Why should us as a town lower our fare prices to match other towns (Bridgwater) why can't ours stay the same. Or Bridgwater match our prices.</p> <p>I feel that the taxi trade will die down if the prices change as no driver will want to come out on a Saturday for single time, when most or some use the Saturday to bump up the Monday-Friday work if we have had a day poorly.</p> <p>That's 16 hrs at single rate and 8 hrs at time and a half, I can see taxi drivers refusing the new tariff.</p> <p>The thing is most drivers will then want to do the 23.00-07.00 shift to get the money and hardly any drivers will want to stay out any longer to get very little</p>
42	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>All cost like insurance and services have gone up. Fuel is still high. You will lose the multi seater's. Across the board it amounts to a decrease when rate 2 is hour later every day and not till 6 pm on a Saturday. No taxis will come out on a Saturday day at rate 1. In the week you are making it more expensive for the old people to use a taxi to go to supermarket. We only just had an increase for the 1st time in 11 years and now you want to take it away and we will need to pay for our meters to be adjusted.</p>
43	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>Whoever created the fares table simply has no idea what it's like to be a taxi driver. You're shortening the Tariff 2 hours, so you can say goodbye to getting a taxi on a Saturday. Taunton has run well for years, now you're trying to</p>

		change it and run it like the others. This council is nearly bankrupt, can't fix simple things in the town and yet still continuing to ruin other things the taxi has pride within. I know someone who owns an 8 seater, who now will be forced to sell it if these proposed fares come in because its stupid. Stop sitting behind your desk, get out and actually ask the drivers what they think! Stop ruining our careers, just because you still get paid regardless!
44	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	This is not an objection but an observation. Even though in some 30 years of operation I've only been asked a handful of times for disabled transport this rate does not encourage me to invest in multi seat or disabled friendly vehicle. No consideration has be given to the extra time it takes to aloft and alight disabled passengers considering the average fare. I.e a short journey might take an hour with 20 minutes loading and 20 minutes off loading with a journey time of a few minutes the driver can only change perhaps the flag fare. How is a driver supposed to pay themselves the minimum wage? It is also worth noting that you've not allowed for luggage, only £2 per passenger on multi seat vehicles.
45	I am someone who uses taxis	I use a taxi weekly, making a journey to or from work at least twice a week. After doing a lot of math to work out how many yards is in my usual fare. Converting it to miles. Then working out what the new fare would be. This is definitely going to make my usual journey more expensive. As everything is done in miles I feel like having the fares broke down into miles is better. I do not agree with my journey becoming more expensive. I agree with making the initial fare for a longer distance and for it to be £4.60, absolutely. But the additional 1/10 mile should not be as high at 30p. Please consider this charge being less to keep these services being accessible. This would increase my monthly, minimum, taxi costs by over £15 per month.
46	I am someone who uses taxis	Although South Somerset would see a reduction in average taxi prices, other areas I believe would see an increase.  Taxi providers will use the table as a bench mark which will then likely increase annually with inflation making taxi prices far higher overall.  The proposed bench should be much closer to the lower areas. Cost of living doesn't vary over the county enough to warrant the difference in prices. Taxi companies in South somerset in particular are gouging! People would use taxis more regularly and go into Somerset towns (leisure, tourism) if it wasn't so expensive.
47	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	with the cost of living as it is people who need to use a taxi as their only way of travel will not be able to afford it and so we will be losing customers.



48	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	As an owner driver of a 6 seater vehicle the changes your are proposing will effect me greatly. I do a lot of 6 seater work and pay greatly for the insurance. These people would then have to book 2 vehicles which means putting 2 vehicles on the road that one could have done. If this comes into force I will be looking to cut costs and go back to a salon.
49	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I drive MPV and personally this won't benifit me, especially on longer drives, earning an extra £8 really won't make a journey worth it considering it'll cost more with fuel then a normal 4 seater job. So I may aswell get a 4 seater car instead taking an 8 seater of the road and I'm sure any mpv driver will feel the same.</p> <p>I also prioritise working a Saturday at the moment over any other day but that will not be happening if it isn't worth it! With Saturday being the busiest day of the week and having to put more hours in to make the time worth it. Due to mid week not being great allot of the time Saturdays tend to give us the extra boost in wages to cover the hours to get even an hourly minimum wage as most days this is hard to get except Saturdays.</p>
50	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>Hi to all I come here to disagree to the proposal so for me is a (No) . My reason for that is we can't not compare Country Taxis Driver whit City Taxis or Bigger Towns Taxis as the amount of work in that's places is much higher then in our areas .sow means in the time with do a bigger Job come back and sit down waiting for other costumer, in busy places they are in the go sow their earning is much bigger till if we 2 long journey exmple to Cullompton and come back. And also this area see better day's the now the Town is much less busier then before and all the prices and cost of living is higher for everyone. And where we Taxi Drivers break even is on Saturday as is the busy day of the week. And cand bring our wages to better level. This how I see, now from experience. Thanks And from me is (No) thank you</p>
51	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	The 6 seater rates are not suitable for all the included economies at play. A 6 seater in a city like Taunton may make several small trips per day using their extra seats, making the proposed system appropriate and sufficiently rewarding. However, a more rurally based 6 seater in an area like Mendip will mostly run with 4 passengers or less, with occasional exceptions at weekends, in which case the proposed table will provide insufficient reward to cover the extra costs associated with running a more expensive, less fuel-economic vehicle. This will lead to a reduction in the number of available 6 seaters in such areas, resulting in the use of 2 cars to carry 5 or more in a party, rather than 1, which will

		<p>be a bad result for the environment, and a bad outcome for customers, who will struggle to get around in large groups.</p> <p>Also, I believe that a 100% increase for all bank holidays is over the top, and a bit weird, because it puts all bank holidays in the same status category as Christmas Day and Boxing Day. If one can earn as much on an August bank holiday as one can at Christmas, where is the incentive to get cars out at Christmas?</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to consider these views.</p>
52	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>I am writing to reject the proposed revisions to the tariff of fares. Its important to recognise that we have only had one increase in the tariff in approximately 12 years in Somerset West and Taunton. However, with respect to the proposed tariff changes a balance does need to be struck between the interests of the taxi service provider and the end consumer. My concerns with respect to the proposed tariff revisions are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You have removed time and a half for fares on Saturday up and until 11pm, which is a substantial regression. It should remain time and a half all of Saturday as it is currently.</li> <li>2. The alteration in the journey cost from £2.40 for the first 425-yards currently to £4.60 for the first mile will substantially disincentivise people taking short journeys. Old people doing shopping in particular will be frightened by the increase for short journeys - being presented with a cost of £4.60 as soon as the meter is switched on. There is clearly a psychological effect that needs to be taken into account, which will impact utilisation of taxis. The present arrangements under the existing Somerset West and Taunton tariff should be retained.</li> <li>3. The proposed tariff reduces the amount paid for taxi vehicles carrying more than 4 passengers substantially except on Christmas Day or a Bank Holiday. For example, the proposed comparison table highlights that 20 miles at 9am on a Monday will fall from £81.00 currently to £65.60 under the proposed tariff. This is whilst most of the costs of operating have increased significantly: taxi insurance (45% increase this year), fuel costs, public liability insurance etc. It costs more to buy and run a 6 or 8-seater vehicle than a 4-seater vehicle and the cost per passenger is also significantly less as more people are carried, making them much more affordable to the end consumers than 4-seater vehicles.</li> <li>4. Other forms of public transport under this authority are being subsidised, including private bus operators. We are not subsidised for the service we provide to the public and this needs to be taken into account with respect to the proposed reduction in fares given the aforementioned increase in costs. In addition, elderly passengers are entitled to free bus passes and if the fare structure for short journeys is altered so substantially, with an associated psychological effect, it make cause a significant fall in these passengers using taxis. We are struggling with increased costs and reduced</li> </ol>

		profits as it is, without fares being cut on some journeys and without customers being put off using taxis by the proposed tariff structure.
53	I am someone who uses taxis	I think as the council propose using public transport more it should be cheaper yes the rising costs in this economy is bad however for people under the age of 25 it's not safe for people to walk home after a night out with all the knife crime so people use taxis and buses with bus strikes everyday that is not viable you are now isolating people who can't drive or even get buses in surrounding villages into towns of all hours of the day
54	Other – Advocate for people with disabilities	There doesn't seem to be an equality impact assessment to reflect how people with disabilities and older persons are more reliant on taxis and therefore are disproportionately affected by the changes
55	I am someone who uses taxis	The blanket 100% on BHs etc is very high. Suggest 65% - 75%.
56	I am someone who uses taxis	Since there are no bus on Sunday anybody wanting to go out for any distance has no choice but to book a taxi - doubling standard fare for Sunday is too heavy a burden to the travelling public
Page 75	57	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner
	58	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner
	59	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner
	60	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner
	61	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner
	62	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner
		West Somerset taxi drivers in Minehead who have signed below are objecting to the proposed changes to the tariffs on the following 5 grounds.  1. Losing the time and a half rate on Saturdays and extending the start time on weekdays to 23:00 hours. On ourtariff from 2011 we had a 50% uplift from 7pm to 7am, but when the rates changed in 2022 {after 11 years of waiting for a fair Increase) it went to 10pm to 7am with the extra 50% added to ALL DAY SATURDAY. Now you want to take this away! We the undersigned request that we keep the current tariff along with the current distances that we are operating under and to reinstate the 7pm uplift to 50%. Since this was removed there are few of us working evenings resulting in the public having trouble getting taxis. We also request to keep the Saturday 50% uplift as well. Example: One of the most frequent weekend trips we do is a trip from Butlins to top of town (Wetherspoons). This is 9/10ths of a mile and would be £4.60 under your proposed new rate on a Saturday compared to the current £6.00 on Saturdays. This will result in fewer taxis being on the road on Saturdays. Most of us can do 10 plus trips each and this would result in a loss of Income of £14.00 per driver. We ask is this fair. Many of us only work weekends for the EXTRA 50%

63	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<p>2. Minimum fare increase for our older customers represents approximately a 30% increase to the short journeys which we do many of during the week and we feel this will result in an income downturn as the older population of West Somerset {one of the highest areas population wise) will turn away from their current taxi usage to only minimal or essential use. But we would accept a new start rate of £3 leaving all the rest of the tariffs rates and distances the same.</p> <p>3. The cost of owning a larger taxi that can carry more than 4 Passengers comes with a cost of the extra fuel it takes to move up to 8 passengers along with higher insurance costs and we know that a £2 per extra passenger will result in loss of income as opposed to the current rate of 50% extra for any number of passengers over 4. Example: Under your proposed new rates, a Monday to Friday daytime trip from Minehead to Taunton with 6 passengers onboard would be £72.00/£74.00 approximately as opposed to the current rate of £90.00/£94.00, once again a loss of income!</p> <p>4. We were told that the merger of the councils would not affect us but here it is!</p> <p>5. The waiting time change could also lead to a downturn in income if we must wait 2 minutes before extra charges start, as we currently get 20p after the first 35 seconds</p>
64	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	
65	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	
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72	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	
73	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	

74	I am a licensed taxi driver and/or taxi owner	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Christmas day and New years day are not always bank holidays. The wording needs to include these days additionally to bank holidays.</li> <li>2. I believe all districts previously had an additional 50% of the proper fare for over 4 passengers. This should be continued to allow for the extra expenses of running the larger vehicles. Customers are still making a saving by not having to pay for two 4 seaters also saving the driver adding "extras" to the meter, which is not always clear to passengers until the end of the journey.</li> <li>3. Waiting time is suitable at £30 per hour but should be broken down to smaller increments, i.e., 25p for every 30 seconds.</li> <li>4. The flag price is quite high. This could be reduced to £3.50 for the first 1200 yards without overly affecting the total on longer journeys but preventing higher prices for shorter journeys.</li> <li>5. Sedgemoor previously had the ability to charge a booking fee. This was extremely useful allowing for out of town customers to still travel without the driver losing on "dead miles" I appreciate this can be abused but maybe the wording could include something along the lines of "a booking fee may be charged for a pre booked Hackney carriage where the journey does not start/ finish or travel through the town limits and must not exceed £2.50 per mile from base/rank to pickup point. The customer should be made aware of this additional price at the time of booking" In many areas private hire vehicles not restricted by this maximum tariff would normally pick up this sort of work meaning the booking fee for hackneys is not required however Sedgemoor in particular operates mostly Hackney vehicles which necessitates the need for this booking fee allowing the most rural customers acessibility to travel. As a driver who has charged a booking fee on occasion, I have never received any negative feedback from the customer suggesting it was unreasonable.</li> <li>6. Taunton previously had 50% of the proper fare for night work from 10pm til 7am and on Saturdays. This should be included to allow as an incentive for drivers to work unsociable hours.</li> </ol> <p>I am more than happy to attend the meeting and explain further or answer any questions.</p>
75	Other – member of the public	This will affect people's pockets yet again and risk more people taking the chance and drink driving.



Somerset Council  
Scrutiny Committee  
– 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024



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Octagon Theatre – Capital Programme

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Division / Local Member: Cllr Faye Purbrick and Cllr Andy Soughton

## 1. Summary

- 1.1.** The extension and refurbishment of the Octagon Theatre in Yeovil was previously part of the Council’s Capital Programme. It was removed when capital costs rose significantly and interest rates on borrowing made the project unviable. Councillors took a decision at that point to remove it from the Capital Programme.

A revised Octagon scheme has been proposed (with an indicative overall cost of £15m) and an application to retain £10m of funding from DCMS has been submitted (with the result awaited). Further funding has been secured (in principle) from Yeovil Town Council and a £15m refurbishment scheme is now proposed with no requirement for further capital input from Somerset Council.

Once completed the intention would be to devolve the Theatre to Yeovil Town Council to operate.

- 1.2.** “.....we will continue to work with these, other businesses and as part of the Great South West Partnership to unlock opportunities for clean and green growth that will play a prominent role alongside tourism and culture. We already offer so much - from Glastonbury Festival, the largest greenfield music and performing arts festival in the world, Bridgwater Carnival’s spectacular procession to the tranquillity of the Exmoor Dark Skies festival. Promoting Somerset as a destination on the national and global stage will support the existing economy enable regeneration and encourage development of new, creative attractions”.

## **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1.** Councillors are asked to consider adding the revised Octagon project to the Council Capital Programme. The scheme will be much revised from the previous scheme, which was unaffordable. The new scheme will be funded by DCMS, Yeovil Town Council and funds in hand or via grant applications.

There is no expectation that further capital funds will be required from Somerset Council.

## **2.2.**

## **3. Background**

- 3.1.** A previous scheme to enlarge and renovate the Octagon Theatre was included in the Council's Capital Programme. This project was curtailed when the eventual cost escalated to an estimated c£30m and interest rates rose meaning that the interest payments on the borrowing to fund the scheme made the project unaffordable.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) had previously conditionally offered £10m of capital funding towards the scheme.

The facility was closed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 for intrusive surveys to take place which were intended to 'de-risk' the project as far as possible.

Architects were appointed and BAM were retained to provide preconstruction advice. A Quantity Survey was appointed. The larger scheme was developed to an advanced stage before costs increased to an unacceptable level and we had to curtail the project.

A revised Outline Business Case has been submitted by Somerset Council (January 2024) and this level of support remains available pending a Council submission later in the year of a Full Business Case (FBC).

Full Council agreed to retain the temporary closure of the Octagon Theatre in 2024 whilst exploring all options to renovate the facility

The revised project includes the provision of a fly tower (which would expand the range of programmes that could be attracted to the Octagon Theatre), a solution to the many accessibility issues that exist at the site, improvements to the auditorium (with a modest increase in capacity within the existing space),



improvements to the front of house and catering facilities and external landscaping.

- 3.2.** If approved the Council will appoint relevant professionals in 2024 to revise the design and provide professional services to enable the submission of the FBC later in 2024. Works would be expected to start in 2025 with completion scheduled for autumn 2026 ahead of the seasonal pantomime.
- 3.3.** We have received considerable useful feedback from DCMS relating to our Outline Business Case Submission and should the project be added to the Capital programme then we have until late autumn to submit a Full Business Case to DCMS who would at that point confirm the award of £10m towards the £15m scheme.
- 3.4.** We are starting the process of procuring a new team of Architects (to review, learn from and revise the original drawings) and other relevant professional support. This is essential to progress the project to a stage where the Full Business Case can be submitted.

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1.** The Council has been in near constant dialogue with both Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) to seek to retain the offer of £10m from the latter towards a less extensive project.
- 4.2.** Latterly the Council has had ongoing conversations with Yeovil Town Council regarding the devolution of the Theatre once the capital project has been completed.

This matter was discussed at Full Council in February 2024 as part of the savings package and the intention now is that the completed Theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council who will also accept future revenue and capital cost risks.

This proposal has been discussed with DCMS who are accepting of the approach to devolve the asset to YTC upon completion.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1.** The implications of the decision to add the project to the Capital programme are that Somerset Council will continue to develop the project to a point where a full Business Case can be submitted to the DCMS who would in turn approve £10m of capital funding towards the project. The Council will project manage the work to the point of completion of the capital scheme.

- 5.2. The wider implication should the project continue to completion stage is that the completed Theatre would be devolved to Yeovil Town Council with the staff also transferring under TUPE. All future revenue and maintenance liabilities would also transfer to YTC.
- 5.3. The implication of not adding the Theatre to the Capital Programme is that we could not progress the application for funding to DCMS. The Council would then have a choice to make between reopening the Theatre using its own funds but recognising that all of the issues that have led to the development of the project would remain and making the decision that the Theatre would remain closed.

## 6. Background papers

- 6.1. <https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=213&MID=2377>

The Octagon Theatre was discussed at the Executive meeting on 4/10/2023, the link above refers.