

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

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	Somerset Council		
Version	1.1	Date Completed	22/03/2024
Description of what is being impact assessed			
<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> <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</p>			

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 22nd 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 1st 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 1st 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
Age	<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>	☒	☐	☐
Disability	<p>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.</p>	☒	☐	☐

Gender reassignment	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"/>
Marriage and civil partnership	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"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	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"/>
Race and ethnicity	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"/>
Religion or belief	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"/>
Sex	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"/>
Sexual orientation	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"/>

Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)	<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>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<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>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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.				
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how regularly an individual uses taxis. • how far they travel and when. • their financial circumstances. • the parts of Somerset they routinely travel in. <p>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.</p>				
Completed by:	John Rendell			
Date	04/01/2024			
Signed off by:				
Date				
Equality Lead sign off name:	Angela Farmer			

Equality Lead sign off date:	22/3/24
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	
Review date:	

DRAFT

DRAFT