



Castle Cars Tonbridge Ltd

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Licensing Services
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Gibson Building, Gibson Drive
Kings Hill, West Malling,
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24th December 2021

Objection to Fare Increase

I am writing to formally object to the fare increase recently granted by the Licensing committee. Having spoken to a number of the drivers working with and for Castle Cars this objection is based on the following.

1. A 50p increase on each fare regardless of distance equates to a total increase of about £27 per week to the average driver. Their fuel bill has increased by around £60 pw in the last few months alone.
2. It is now almost 5 years since the last fare increase. Licencing fees have been increased several times in that period by around 15%, as has insurance, tyres, servicing costs etc. In the past 2 years the cost of a second hand vehicle in the 2-5 year old bracket has almost doubled, an increase of around £6000-£8000 or £40 per week over the average life of a taxi.
3. Inflation is now running at over 5%, and since the last fare increase in May 2017 the RPI has increased from 271.7 (05/17) to 314.3 (11/21), an increase of 42.6 or 15.7%. We would actually need an increase to the level of my original request of £3.00 per mile and a 40p increase on the start rate to bring fares in line with that. For some reason my request of a 40p per mile increase was not included on section 1.4.5 of the fare review, only the 40p increase to the start rate.
4. I understand that there was concern that any increase would put fares out of the reach of some elderly or less affluent people that depend on the service. I understand this but it also needs to be balanced against the needs for taxi drivers to make a fair living working largely unsocial hours, in what can be a dangerous and unpleasant environment at times, while being amongst the first to suffer financially when any restrictions are placed on the hospitality or travel industries as we have seen during the pandemic. My company turnover dropped to around 15% of usual during the early days of the pandemic resulting in almost 50% of drivers leaving the company to find better paying work, and these have not returned to the trade. Unless potential drivers can see that they can earn a reasonable living by coming into the business then I not only fear for the future of my company, but also the trade as a whole, which would have a far more detrimental effect on those that rely on us to

get them to and from doctors, shops, hospitals etc where no bus or train service exists, than a small increase in the cost.

5. Taking all of the above into consideration I feel that I have no option but to object to the increase as suggested and have amended my proposal in the hope that it will be acceptable even to those that may have been against the previous suggestion.

6. I propose that the start rate be kept at £3.00 for the first half mile, and then that the rate be increased to 20p for each 125 yards instead of the current 135 yards. This would mean an increase over 2 miles of only 30p instead of the 50p suggested at the last meeting, thereby keeping fares at a reasonable rate for those on low incomes who generally travel less than 3 miles, while giving a 20p per mile increase over longer fares and helping to offset the increased costs since the last tariff change. I also wish to keep the fare + half tariff changing at 2330. This would also mean the weekend surcharge of 50p would end at that time instead of midnight as stated on the **NOTICE UNDER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1976 SECTION 65**.

The increase as structured above by only increasing the 2 mile fare by 30p will also keep our rates below those of our neighbours. I believe that basing fares on 2 miles gives a false view of the actual cost when my research shows the average distance to be 6.9 miles and fare tables based on this distance or similar would give a far more realistic view.

I would further request that another review of fares be held before the end of 2022 rather than the usual 4-5 years that we have become accustomed to in this borough.

I would be happy to attend any review of fares if requested to give more detail in person.

Yours



Terry Hill
(Director of Castle Cars)

Please sign below with your name and badge number if you support this fare increase as suggested

STEPHEN ALLEN [REDACTED] 1986
JULIAN NALL [REDACTED] 1871
DANIEL MURPHY 1946
MR. S. AUSTIN 3064
JOHN BERDY [REDACTED]
C. POWEN 354
M. Sams 1767
D. POWER [REDACTED] P413.