
Variations to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's Fees

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	08 January 2024
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lee Dillon
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC4252

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider the matters arising from the statutory 28 day consultation period relating to variations to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and private hire operator's fees.
- 1.2 To consider whether any additional changes should be made the wider set of discretionary Public Protection Partnership fees being recommended to full Council for approval.

2 Recommendation

The Licensing Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the comments received during the statutory consultation on variations to hackney carriage and private hire vehicle and private hire operator's fees as set out in **Appendix A** to this report.
- 2.2 **CONSIDER** the proposed hackney carriage and private hire vehicle and private hire operator's fees and if any modifications should be made to those being recommended to full Council for approval in light of the consultation responses.
- 2.3 **CONSIDER** if any modifications should be made to the wider set of relevant discretionary Public Protection Partnership fees being recommended to full Council for approval.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Discretionary fees and charges relating to licences and registrations are based on cost recovery, and should they not

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Implication	Commentary
	<p>reflect the cost of providing the service, there is a risk of generating a surplus or deficit.</p> <p>All costs associated with running the consultation via public notice was met from within existing budgets. The decision was taken at the November 2023 Licensing Committee meeting not to advertise in two publications as had previously been done to reduce costs.</p>
Human Resource:	<p>There are no human resources implications associated with the consultation. The consultation was undertaken within existing resources within the PPP and the Recruitment, Consultation and Performance Team.</p>
Legal:	<p>Fees for vehicle and operators' licences</p> <p>s.70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976: "...a district council may charge such fees for the grant of vehicle and operators' licences as may be resolved by them from time to time and as may be sufficient in the aggregate to cover in whole or in part:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the reasonable cost of the carrying out by or on behalf of the district council of inspections of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles for the purpose of determining whether any such licence should be granted or renewed; (b) the reasonable cost of providing hackney carriage stands; and (c) any reasonable administrative or other costs in connection with the foregoing and with the control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles." <p>The licensing costs recoverable by a district authority in respect of vehicles and operators is limited to vehicle inspection costs for the specific purpose of determining their suitability to be licensed, reasonable cost of providing hackney carriage stands, reasonable administration costs for processing the licence application and finally reasonable costs associated with "...control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles."</p>
Risk Management:	<p>The fees are potentially subject to legal challenge. It is therefore important that the fees and methodology are subject to ongoing review.</p>

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Implication	Commentary			
Property:	None			
Policy:	<p>The Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) is required every autumn to propose a budget to partner authorities. This includes proposals in relation to discretionary fees and charges. The individual authorities are then required to make their own decisions in relation to the fees.</p> <p>It is not the role of this Committee to set the fees for 2024/25. The Committee is being asked to consider the comments made in relation to the operators and vehicle licence fees received during the statutory consultation. The Committee is then asked to recommend a set of fees to full Council for adoption.</p>			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:		✓		<p>No evident contribution to inequality</p> <p>The income received from licence applicants covers the cost of providing the statutory licensing function.</p>
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		No impact
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		No impact
Environmental Impact:	✓			The ongoing provision of a remittance on the fees for hybrid and electric vehicles

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Implication	Commentary			
				may have a positive impact on the environment.
Health Impact:	✓			If operators and drivers are minded to take up the offer of a reduced or wholly subsidised fee for electric or hybrid vehicles this could have a positive impact on air quality and therefore have a positive impact on health.
ICT Impact:		✓		No impact
Digital Services Impact:		✓		This information will be included on the Public Protection Partnership Website using existing resources.
Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			Services we are proud of. A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire.
Core Business:		✓		No impact
Data Impact:		✓		No impact
Consultation and Engagement:	Members of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade as well as members of the public, Councillors and service users were consulted on the statutory fees as is required by the legislation. This was enabled via emails directly to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licence holders and Private Hire Operators, a public notice in the Newbury Weekly News, a notice placed in Market Street Reception window and a consultation notice added to the Public Protection Partnership website and the West Berkshire Council website for the mandatory 28 day consultation period.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The JPPC is required by the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) that set up the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) shared service, to recommend a draft set of fees and charges to each of the member Councils (Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire) annually. The proposed fees for 2024/25 were discussed at the JPPC meeting held on

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Monday, [02 October 2023](#). In light of the then inflation rate it was proposed to increase the hourly rate from £64p/h to £68.25p/h for 2024/25 (increase of 6.7% which was in line with CPI in the 12 months to the end of August 2023)

- 4.2 These fees were then presented to the Licensing Committee at the [06 November 2023 meeting](#). The Committee agreed that, save for the private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees, the discretionary fees go forward for consideration as part of the Council fee setting process.
- 4.3 The Committee also agreed that the fees for private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees be subjected to a twenty eight day statutory consultation period. If objections were received they be considered by the Licensing Committee at this meeting and that any changes arising from the consultation be recommended to full Council for approval. The fees, with or without variation would come into effect on the 01 April 2024.
- 4.4 The proposed 2024/25 fees subjected to the statutory consultation are set out below:

Hackney Carriage (Taxi) and Private Hire Vehicle Licence

Hackney carriage vehicle new / renewal	£307/£273
Private hire vehicle new / renewal	£307/£273
Private hire vehicle with dispensation / renewal	£307/£273
Temporary Vehicle Licence (issued up to 3 months Maximum)	£273

Private Hire Operator Licence

Number of vehicles	New	Renewal
1	£512	£375
2	£597	£461
3	£682	£546
4	£768	£631
5	£853	£717
6	£938	£802
7	£1024	£887
8	£1109	£973
9	£1194	£1058
10	£1280	£1143
11	£1365	£1229
12	£1450	£1314
13	£1536	£1399
14	£1621	£1484
15	£1706	£1570
16	£1792	£1655
17	£1877	£1740
18	£1962	£1826
19	£2048	£1911
20	£2133	£1996

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20+	£2133	£1996
Variation to licence	£68.25	£68.25

4.5 Who and How we Consulted

- The consultation ran from 23 November 2023 to 21 December 2023.
- A notice was placed in the Newbury Weekly News on the 23 November 2023.
- The consultation was also posted on the West Berkshire Council consultation pages and the PPP website on the 23 November 2023.
- A copy of the notice was also placed in the Market Street Reception on the 23 November 2023.
- A copy of the notice was emailed individually to all licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Proprietors for their comments on the 23 November 2023.

4.6 Eight responses to the consultation were received and all were from the taxi trade. Although this is a relatively low number of responses it should be noted that in 2022 only four were received (two from residents and two from members of the Community Panel who were also parish councillors.)

4.7 All of the respondents objected to the proposals set out in the statutory consultation. The majority of the objections cited the impact that the cost of living crisis was already having on their businesses and personal lives and asked that the fees were not increased. One of the respondents raised concerns about the inflationary figures used to set the hourly rate and the omission of the wider fees from the consultation process. Two respondents raised concerns about value for money in terms of the levels of service received. Two commented on the fact that the cost of training was not being included in the driver's licence fee as had previously been agreed and one respondent raised concerns about the operator checks not being undertaken regularly and renewal notices not being issued. The issue of training costs is being looked into and the renewal notifications have recommenced now the new system is operational.

4.8 Detailed responses to the objections are set out in the appendix but in summary:

- The service should be cost neutral and operate at no cost to the taxpayer. The resourcing of the service has been amended to reflect the falling levels of income and reduced number of licences being issued post Covid. The Service, like all businesses, has been affected by rising salary, supplies and services costs.
- As was reported at the November 2023 meeting the cost of a new vehicle licence has increased by 8.9% over the past six years. The proposed cost of renewing a vehicle licence has decreased from £282 in 2019/20 to £273 in 2024/25. Since 2021 tariffs charged by the trade have increased annually by 5%, 8% and 7.5% respectively and further increases are proposed in a separate item on this agenda. It should be noted however that prior to 2021 the tariffs had not been increased since 2013.
- The hourly rate set at the October JPPC meeting included an increase of 6.7% which was in line with CPI in the 12 months to the end of August 2023. The CPI figure remained at 6.7% in September, decreased to 4.6% in October and fell

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again to 3.9% in November 2023. The Bank of England expects inflation to continue to slow and be back to target levels (circa 2%) by the end of 2025.

- With respect to the inclusivity of the fees for training courses we are now looking into this issue in detail including examining any legacy issues.
- A programme has been put in place to ensure that all outstanding operator's checks are undertaken during Q4 of the 2023/24 Financial Year (i.e., between 01 Jan and 31st March 2024).
- There is no statutory requirement for the Council to issue renewal reminders. The Team have been working hard to implement the new IT system which, when fully operational, will automate this process.

4.9 As objections have been received as was previously agreed the objections have been brought to this Committee for discussion prior to the Committee making a recommendation on the proposed fees to full Council.

5 Other options considered

5.1 There are no alternative options, as the consideration of the objections and setting of the fees are legal requirements as outlined above.

6 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A – Comments Received During the Consultation.

Background Papers:

[Section 70\(1\) of the Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: All

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