

10/01339/EP-L

SD-BAL



West Berkshire Executive Hire Association
Wayside
46, Greenham Road
Newbury
Berks
29th April 2010.

Senior Licensing Officer
West Berkshire District Council
Faraday Road
Newbury
Berks

Dear Sir,

Proposed Fees for Hackney Carriage & Private Hire

With reference to the notification in the Newbury Weekly News of 8th April 2010. regarding the proposed substantial increase in the Private Hire Operators Licence, we are writing to confirm that the Association strongly objects to this being implemented.

In February this year representatives of the Association were invited to an informal meeting with Mr Leahy, when outline details of the proposal were explained with assurances that the full details would be sent to the Association shortly.

We were given to understand that the increase was necessary to cover a loss by the Council of approximately £19,000.00. in the accounts relating to the Private Hire Licensing section. The implication was that this had been building up over the previous five years, without anything being done to rectify the situation, but now action was to be taken to restore the accounts to a profitable position by increasing the Operator's fees from £49.50. to £163.00., which equates to a 230% increase.

Had this problem been addressed earlier the fee could have been increased year on year to ensure that this section of the accounts remained profitable. It seems as though we are being asked for more money just to balance the books, placing this burden on the current licence holders, taking no account of the Private Hire Operators who have ceased trading in the last 5 years

We note that other local councils do not feel the necessity to charge such high fees, for example :-

South Oxfordshire	£55.00.
Wiltshire	£85.00.
Test Valley	£77.00.

Presumably their books balance!

We feel that, had the full details of the proposal been available to us before the Meeting of the Council, then we could have made constructive comments on the proposal and the swingeing increase, which is not very helpful, considering the current downturn in business.

All Parliamentary Parties agree that we are still recovering from a recession, so why does this Council consider it reasonable and moral to impose this ludicrously excessive increase with no proven justification. The Association feeling that this proposal should be challenged, because having taken this action once, what's to stop the Council doing it again.

Yours faithfully



~~Keith Jenn~~
Chairperson of the West Berkshire Executive Hire Association.