Licensing Fees and Charges 2027/28

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	02 November 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Tom McCann
Date Head of Service agreed report:	13 October 2026
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	23 October 2026
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	Licensing Committee

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To inform the Licensing Committee about the Public Protection Partnership's Fees and Charges which were proposed by the Joint Public Protection Committee at its meeting on the 12 October 2026. Each partner Council is required to review the fees and charges on an annual basis. **Appendix A** details the proposed fees and charges for 2027/28 for the Public Protection Service.

1.2 To consider the proposals for the statutory consultation associated with the fees and charges for private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees.

2 Recommendations

The Licensing Committee:

2.1 Is informed about the 2027/28 fees and charges detailed in Appendix A

2.2 Agrees that the fees for Private Hire Operators and Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licence fees are subjected to the statutory consultation period as described in paragraph 5.10.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The costs of producing this report and running the consultation exercise will be met from within the existing Public Protection Partnership budgets.

	Discretionary fees and charges relating to licences and registrations are based on cost recovery, and should they not reflect the cost of providing the service, there is a risk of generating a surplus or deficit. **25/26 Licensing Income** The Partnership Licensing Service generated a total income of £684k during 2025/26. **26/27 Licensing Income** For the period P1 to P6, the service has generated £244k of licensing income, which is broadly in line with the income achieved during the same period in the previous financial year. Based on the Q2 Budget Monitoring data, the Service is currently forecasting total licensing income of approximately £600k for 2026/27. This forecast will be reviewed and refined as part of the Q3 budget monitoring process in conjunction with the service. From an income perspective, performance is currently on track with expectations, although this will continue to be monitored throughout the remainder of the financial year.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications associated with the production of this report. All consultation work will be undertaken within existing resources.
Legal:	**Fees for vehicle and operators' licences** 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: (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."

	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." The Council must also have regard to the principles established in R (Hemming t/a Simply Pleasure Ltd) v Westminster City Council, which confirmed that licensing fees must be set on a cost-recovery basis and be reasonable, proportionate and transparent. The case highlighted the importance of ensuring that fee income is used only to recover those costs lawfully attributable to the administration, control, supervision and, where legislation permits, enforcement of the relevant licensing regime. Licensing fees should not be used to generate a profit or subsidise unrelated Council functions.
Risk Management:	The fees are potentially subject to legal challenge. It is therefore important the fees and methodology are subject to ongoing review.
Property:	None
Policy:	The Joint Public Protection Committee is required every autumn to propose a budget to partner authorities. This includes proposals in relation to discretionary fees and charges. It is not the role of the Licensing Committee to set the fees for 2027/28. The Committee is being asked to consider the fees prior to them being considered by Executive and Council. The Committee may amend the proposals and put forward alternative fees for consideration, however as fees are set on a cost recovery basis any reductions may need to covered by a subsidy. The fees, with the exception of the private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees would be subject to the Council's budget consultation process. The private hire operator, and hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licence fees have a separate statutory consultation process that must be adhered to.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		There are no implications arising from the recommendation in this report. Any equalities comments received during the consultation would be fed back to the Committee.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		There are no implications arising from the recommendation in this report.
Environmental Impact:		x		The service plays a significant role in the protection of the environment including air quality, land contamination, planning considerations and enforcement of green energy claims. The setting of fees on a cost recovery basis will help to maintain capacity in this area.
Health Impact:		x		A significant number of the Partnership's Service Priorities relate to protecting and improving health. These include safe and healthy food chain, safety in the workplace, protecting consumers from fraud, improved living environment, protecting the environment and protecting animal welfare. The setting of fees on a cost recovery basis should continue to have a positive impact on the health of residents and visitors to West Berkshire.

ICT Impact:		x		There are no implications arising from the recommendation in this report.
Digital Services Impact:		x		The consultation will be published on the Council's website and the PPP website.
Council Strategy Priorities:		x		This work is business as usual within the service.
Core Business:				This work is business as usual within the service.
Data Impact:		x		All information collected as a result of the consultation and any data collected during the processing of applications will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant privacy statement.

Consultation and Engagement:	The fees for Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operators will be subject to statutory consultation. All other fees and charges will be subjected to any corporate consultation processes.

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report seeks approval of the proposed Licensing Fees and Charges for 2027/28 in accordance with the requirements of the Inter-Authority Agreement governing the Public Protection Partnership.

4.2 Whilst a significant proportion of licensing fees are prescribed by national legislation and cannot be amended locally, the discretionary fees have been reviewed to ensure they continue to reflect the full cost of service delivery. Taking account of increases in staffing costs, support service recharges, IT systems costs and wider inflationary pressures, the proposed hourly rate used to calculate discretionary fees is proposed to increase from £74 to £79 per hour for 2027/28.

4.3 The Joint Public Protection Committee has considered the proposed fees and recommended their approval. The Committee voted in favour of the recommendations set out in that report and reflected in Appendix A. The Committee did however ask for additional information about the make-up of the above inflation hourly rate to come back to the December JPPC meeting. The most significant contributor to this has been increased costs associated with the Service's IT system.

4.4 A small number of discretionary licensing fees, specifically those relating to Private Hire Operators and Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licences, are subject to a statutory consultation process. The proposed consultation arrangements, timescales and decision-making process are set out within this report.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 The Joint Public Protection Committee (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.

5.2 It is noted that a significant number of fees within the licensing field are set by Government Regulation and cannot therefore be changed by the Council. These are identified in green (statutory fees) on the fee schedule at **Appendix A.**

5.3 Members are asked to note that a significant proportion of the statutory fees have not been uplifted for many years whilst costs have been rising significantly for the Service. These statutory fees will be adjusted in-year if any variations are made to legislation. It should be noted that Licensing Act 2003 fees have not been increased since 2005 and Gambling Act 2005 charges have not increased since 2007, which has been a significant contributor to the gap between costs and income.

5.4 In recognition of the growing disparity between income and the costs of administering and enforcing these regimes, Berkshire Leaders have agreed to co-sign a letter to Central Government urging a review of the current statutory fee levels and seeking greater flexibility to ensure that local authorities are able to recover the reasonable costs of delivering these important regulatory functions.

5.5 Discretionary fees are calculated based on the time taken to complete the activity multiplied by the hourly rate. This hourly rate incorporates a range of factors including the wide variety of council support service costs, staffing and associated costs, democracy and governance, policy development relating to licensing functions, contracts, systems and the necessary training to maintain a competent workforce.

5.6 In 2021/22 the full cost of the service, including internal support service re-charges (as per Council budget build processes) and the current establishment lists were updated which resulted in a new rate of £59 p/h and these rates were retained for 2022/23. The hourly rate was increased to £64p/h for 2023/24, £67 for 2024/25, £69p/h in 2025/26 and £74 in 2026/27.

5.7 For the financial year 2027/28, the proposed hourly rate has been rounded to £79 per hour, representing an increase of 6.7% on the 2026/27 discretionary fee rate. The increase reflects the rising cost of delivering the licensing service, including employee salaries and associated on-costs, travel costs, printing costs, professional training, professional fees associated with licensing, management and administrative support, accommodation, information technology, specialist systems, equipment used for licensing purposes and corporate support service recharges.

5.8 Fees are calculated on a cost-recovery basis and may include the reasonable and proportionate costs of processing and determining applications, inspections, consultation, policy development relating to licensing functions, compliance monitoring

and enforcement where permitted by the relevant legislation. In accordance with the principles established by the Hemming vs Wakefield case, the Council has reviewed the methodology used to calculate fees to ensure that charges are robustly evidenced, transparent and limited to the recovery of costs reasonably attributable to the licensing function. Fees may not be used to generate a profit or subsidise unrelated Council services.

5.9 Animal establishment fees will incorporate the costs of inspections conducted on our behalf by the City of London. At the time of writing next year's fees have not been notified but will be incorporated in due course. Any veterinary fees incurred as part of animal licensing will also be recharged at cost.

5.10 The Council is required to undertake a statutory consultation in respect of the hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and private hire operator's fees. It is proposed that:

a) the fees for Private Hire Operators and Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licence fees are subjected to the statutory consultation period from 12 November 2026 to 10 December 2026.
b) a public notice pertaining to the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operators fees be placed in the Newbury Weekly News.
c) a consultation letter is posted to all Taxi and Private Hire Drivers and Private Hire Operators in the District.
d) a copy of the consultation is posted on the Public Protection Partnership website, on the West Berkshire Council Consultation Hub and in the reception area at the Market Street Offices.
e) If no objections are received, the charges for operators and vehicle licence fees be included in the February 2027 Executive and Council papers for approval; or if objections are received they be considered by the Licensing Committee at the meeting on 18 January 2027 and any changes be recommended to full Council for approval.

5.11 The proposed fees were discussed at the Joint Public Protection Committee meeting on the 12 October 2026. The Committee were supportive of the proposals set out in that report and they are reflected in Appendix A. The Committee voted in favour of the recommendations set out in that report and reflected in Appendix A. The Committee did however ask for additional information about the make-up of the above inflation hourly rate to come back to the December JPPC meeting.

6 Proposals

6.1 The Licensing Committee is asked to note the proposed fees and comment on the statutory consultation process.

6.2 The Council is required to undertake a statutory consultation in respect of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire Operator's fees and the proposed mechanism and timescales are set out in paragraph 5.10 for Members to consider and approve.

7 Other options considered

7.1 None. It is a requirement of the Inter Authority Agreement for the JPPC to consider the fees and charges and make a recommendation to the individual authorities. There is a

requirement to set fees and charges annually and there is a statutory requirement to undertake consultation on the proposed charges for operators and vehicle licence fees

8 Conclusion

8.1 Members of the Licensing Committee are asked to note the proposed fees and charges and the consultation proposals and agree a way forward in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation and the Inter Authority Agreement.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Proposed Fees and Charges for 2027/28

Background Papers:

Joint Public Protection Committee Report (12 October 202)6 can be found here: West Berkshire Council - Browse meetings - Joint Public Protection Committee

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☒

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position: ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: All

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