

LICENSING COMMITTEE

PROPOSED LICENSING FEES 2025/26 – Consultation Responses

10 April 2025

Report of the Licensing Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

For members to consider responses to the public consultation for proposed licence fees for the coming year and set such fees with or without modification. (Taxi, Private Hire and Miscellaneous licences).

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the licensing fees for Taxi, Private Hire and Miscellaneous licences be set for 2025/26 on consideration of the public consultation responses.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report is concerned with the setting of licence fees for the following licences.

- Driver, Vehicle and Operator Licences (Taxi and Private Hire)
- Transfer of Ownership and Change of Vehicle Licences
- Scrap Metal Dealers (Mobile and Site)
- Skin Piercing Registration (Personal and Premises)
- Sexual Entertainment Venues
- Sex Shops
- Boatman and Pleasure boats
- Second-hand goods dealer/Market trader
- Pavement Licences

The setting of such fees is a non-executive function and is therefore a matter for this Committee.

1.2 Licensing fees for taxi/private hire and miscellaneous licensing are considered and set under the following legislation.

- Local Government Miscellaneous Provision Act 1976
- Local Government Miscellaneous Provision Act 1982
- Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013
- County of Lancashire Act 1984

- Public Health Acts amended Act 1907
- Business and Planning Act 2020

2.0 Consultation Details

- 2.1 At a previous meeting of this Committee on 6 February 2025 members considered a report in relation to licence fees for the coming financial year 2025/26 (Taxi, Private Hire and Miscellaneous licences).
- 2.2 As required by legislation, the proposed fees have been subject to public consultation. The consultation period ran from Thursday 13 February 2025 to Friday 14 March 2025, the fees, by way of public notice were advertised in the Lancaster Guardian and also displayed at Lancaster and Morecambe Town Hall(s) and made available for inspection, without charge throughout the consultation period.
- 2.3 Although not legislatively required, an email was sent to all current taxi and private hire licence-holders, setting out the proposed fees and inviting comments for consideration as part of the consultation.
- 2.4 2 consultation responses were received as part of the process, both from existing licence holders, one was which was submitted via an elected member.

Attached at **Appendix 1** are the consultation responses.

- 2.5 In summary the responses relate to the following;
- The difference between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle fees, with a suggestion that the disparity is “unfair”.
 - Feelings of disappointment that fees are to rise, given the digitalisation of the taxi/PH application processes and the perception that there is a reduction on office workload due to the process updates.
 - Comparisons are made with other Licensing Authorities fee structures in the surrounding area.

Officer Consideration of Responses

- 2.6 The reason for the difference between the cost of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle fee is clear. The legislation relating to fees requires that each licence type is considered in isolation, and that one area or licence type cannot subsidise another.

As such, when undertaking the fee setting process, the Licensing Manager and Service Accountant break down each licence into an activity log and record time/task analysis against permitted activity to be charged for. Eg. not enforcement.

It is also important to highlight that the cost of a Hackney Carriage roof-sign was removed as a direct cost, approx. £30 per year.

This information has been relayed to the individual making representation, no further comments for consideration have been received in response.

- 2.7 The perception that any savings in relation to digitalisation should be immediate would not accurately reflect the Officer/Manager time currently spent. Whilst front end information and application documents are readily available with little Officer

involvement, the number of back-office checks, including DVLA/HMRC/NR3 and DBS checks remain mandatory as part of the driver process.

Additionally, Officers and Service Manager time spent on the digitalisation is significant, including but not limited to, digital drop-in sessions, system troubleshooting, rectifying applicant errors or oversights and streamlining processes further. Eg, Development of text reminder services.

There is still work to do before the impact of the digitalisation can be accurately assessed.

- 2.8 Licensing Authorities have the flexibility to set the fees they charge licence holders at a local level. The fees charged must cover the cost of the administration and monitoring of the licensing regime, the fees therefore must not create a surplus or deficit of the overall costs of delivering the Licensing Service.

Each Licensing Service is different, numbers of administrative staff, Officer and Managerial structures vary from Council to Council.

Additionally, locally set standards may lead to variances in fees, vehicle testing and inspection regimes, numbers of Officer interactions, creation and work of liaison groups and the accessibility of the service all factors for consideration as part of the fee setting process.

It is also not clear when fees in neighbouring Licensing Authorities were last reviewed or updated, each will be different. Lancaster City Council conduct an annual review to accurately reflect the process, this may not be the case elsewhere. Members will note the variance in charges and costs applied for activities undertaken.

- 2.9 Members of Licensing Committee are asked to consider the consultation representations received and Officer context in response to the comments received.

A copy of the proposed fees is attached to the report at **Appendix 2**.

3.0 Options

The options available to members are:

- a. To set proposed fees and charges as advertised
- b. Amend any individual licence/registration fee, and
- c. Set the date the updated licence fees will take effect.

4.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed fees set by Licensing Committee on 6 February have been the subject to a public consultation. As part of the 28-day consultation 2 responses were received, they must be considered by Licensing Committee prior to updated fees taking effect, with or without modification.
- 6.2 Members are asked to set the date the updated fees will take effect; legislatively this must be within 2 months of the original date (end date of consultation).

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The fees proposed in this report will have no overall impact on the budget, with the total income remaining roughly in line with the total income budgets agreed as part of the 2025/26 budget due to some increases and some decreases based on current costs.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted and have no adverse comments to make regarding the content of the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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