

**Report of** Executive Officer, Taxi & Private Hire Licensing

**Report to** Licensing Committee

**Date:** 7 February 2017

**Subject:** Taxi & Private Hire Licensing – 2017 Fees Review

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

- 1 This report seeks committee members' support for a review of the council's Taxi & Private Hire Licensing fees.
- 2 The council last revised the fees in December 2010, so a review is timely. A review will require significant consultation and engagement.

### Recommendations

1. That members note the information and indicative timescales in this report.
2. That members support the proposal for the council to consult with taxi and private hire trade and other stakeholders on the review of licensing fees.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report is intended to give an introduction to committee members of the reasons for the Fees Review.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The role of the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing service has long been recognised as an important council function in ensuring that the travelling public are safe with professional drivers who have attained good standards, safe vehicles, and a dedicated enforcement team.
- 2.2 In recent years, the spotlight on licensing functions nationally has attracted much media attention, and the deficiencies identified in procedures across the country which led to the shocking effects on a large number of children's lives. Leeds City Council Executive Board initiated a wide-ranging review of its taxi and private hire licensing functions, reporting to the cross-council Safeguarding Group, Licensing Committee, Central and Corporate Scrutiny Boards and to the Executive Board.
- 2.3 The review has resulted in significant changes throughout the service. We have implemented new and strengthened licensing policies, including a strengthened Convictions Criteria policy, and the introduction of a safeguarding training requirement for all drivers. We have implemented an annual online Disclosure & Barring (DBS) procedure, which has required processing around 6000 individuals into the new system over a 12 month cycle ending March 2017. We have changed the shifts of enforcement officers to match their hours of work with the busiest hours of the trade and meet new demands in line with the Deregulation Act 2015. We have created additional roles on a temporary basis to deal with additional DBS work, working within the existing budget using a current surplus, so that a fee review has not been required earlier.
- 2.4 As part of the service improvements, we seek support from the committee for the council to conduct a review of the fees the council charges to the trade, beginning with consultation with the local trade. The report suggests the reasons for the fees review, the possible options and the timescales for the review.

## **3 Main issues**

### **Taxi & Private Hire Licensing funding**

- 3.1 The council's Taxi & Private Hire Licensing service is cost neutral to the council, under the provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1976, which governs licensing fees for authorities in England and Wales. The service is funded through the levying of charges to the local taxi and private hire trade, and revenue from taxi and private hire licensing cannot be devoted to unrelated purposes.

- 3.2 The council last reviewed the fees charged to the local taxi and private hire trade in December 2010, and last changed the fees in January 2011, see the current fees in **Appendix 1**. Since that date, the expectations on a licensing authority and challenges of licensing, customer service and enforcement have changed considerably.

### **Fees Review 2017**

- 3.3 The review will review the costs of running the council's Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Service, currently around £1.8m per year. This review will examine the one off and the permanent costs of sustaining and completing the service improvements reported to committee previously and summarised in section 2.
- 3.4 The review will also review the income to the service from the fees it charges drivers and operators, also around £1.8m per year. In particular, it will examine the trends towards drivers changing from one operator to another.
- 3.5 The review will also seek to learn from best practice elsewhere in the UK, in particular on the following issues:
- Whether there is a case for our fees to be frozen.
  - Whether there is a case for additional resources or activities, such as increasing the size of the enforcement team (around 10 FTEs).
  - Whether there are any new areas for us to charge fees – such as vehicle inspections after accident damage has been repaired – where only those drivers and operators would have to pay.
  - Whether there is a case to reduce fees to encourage behaviours we would encourage – such as wheelchair accessible vehicles, low emission vehicles, 5-7 seat vehicles.
  - Whether the closer working of West Yorkshire licensing authorities has an impact on Leeds' ability to set fees.
  - The impact of our fees on the local trade, particularly the hackney carriage (taxi) tariffs, which similarly have not been reviewed since 2010.
- 3.6 At this stage, it is difficult to be exact about the findings of the review. It is possible to highlight the following indicative milestones.
- **Feb 2017:** Initial report to Licensing Committee. Initial public consultation.
  - **April 2017:** Report to Licensing Committee – results of consultation, options appraisal and recommendations/proposals to change policy. Report on taxi tariff formula.
  - **May 2017:** Further consultations on fees proposals to change agreed at Licensing Committee. Consultation on hackney carriage tariffs.
  - **June 2017:** Delegated decision report from Executive Officer with outcome and final recommendations. Statutory 28 day consultation and notice period for appeals.
  - **August 2017:** Executive approval and implementation of new fees and tariffs.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 The council will undertake a review of all of its existing taxi and private hire licensing policies and conditions in 2017-18. Detailed consultation will be undertaken with the licensed trade, the travelling public, key community groups and stakeholders as proposed changes to policies and conditions are developed. It may be worth the council consulting with neighbouring authorities and core cities as part of the reviews.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 Equality and Cohesion Screening Assessments are carried out on the policies agreed at Licensing Committee which are used to inform decision making.

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

4.3.1 The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing policies contribute to the following aims:

#### **Best Council Plan 2013 -17**

#### **Towards being an Enterprising Council**

#### **Our Ambition and Approach**

**Our Ambition** is for Leeds to be the best city and Leeds City Council to be the best council in the UK – fair, open and welcoming with an economy that is both prosperous and sustainable so all our communities are successful.

**Our Approach** is to adopt a new leadership style of civic enterprise, where the council becomes more enterprising, business and partners become more civic, and citizens become more actively engaged in the work of the city.

#### **Our Best Council Outcomes**

Make it easier for people to do business with us

#### **Our Best Council Objectives**

Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth – Improving the economic wellbeing of local people and businesses. With a focus on:

- Helping people into jobs,
- Boosting the local economy
- Generating income for the council

Ensuring high quality public services – improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city. With a focus on:

- Getting services right first time
- Improving customer satisfaction

4.3.2 The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing policies contribute to priorities:

- Reduce crime levels and their impact across Leeds;
- Effectively tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour in communities;

- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults:

4.3.3 Leeds City Council has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure the duty of care for both children and vulnerable adults across all of its services. This cannot be achieved by any single service or agency. Safeguarding is ultimately the responsibility of all of us and depends on the everyday vigilance of staff who play a part in the lives of children or vulnerable adults.

#### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 As this is an information report, there are no resource or value for money issues to consider.

4.4.2 The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing service is cost neutral to the council and by virtue of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976, raises its own revenue by setting fees to meet the cost of issuing and administering licences. This means that if proposals are associated with additional costs, they will be funded via licence fees and will not place additional pressure on the council's budget. Conversely, it also means that the council will not run a significant budget surplus.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this proposed review, and it is not subject to call in or publication.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 Consideration will be given to any proposal prior to introduction.

### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The review will investigate the opportunity to review the current and future costs of the service and the fees charged by the council to cover those costs.

5.2 The review will engage with staff, the local trade, neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders.

5.3 The review findings will have regard to council policy, conditions and criteria approved by Licensing Committee.

### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 That Members note the information in this report

### **7 Background documents**

**Appendix 1** Leeds City Council Taxi & Private Hire Licensing fees

## Appendix 1 Leeds City Council Taxi & Private Hire Licensing fees

<b>Private Hire Application ( total fees)</b>	£290 which is made up of the following;
Driver application	£120 (includes all modules of the seminar – e.g. module 1, legislation)
DBS check	£ 70
Customer care course	£ 55
English Comprehension Test	£ 25
Knowledge Training pack	£ 15
DVLA check	£ 5 valid for 3 years
Missed driver application appointment	£ 30 *
Seminar re-sit - legislation (1),	£ 20 *
A-Z (4) / Conditions test	£ 20 *
Seminar re-sit - Maps: Districts of Leeds , City centre (2 & 3)	£ 30 * (all modules £90)
Re sit Conditions test	£ 20
Re sit customer care	£ 55
Re sit English comprehension test	£ 25
<b>Driver renewal (total fees)</b>	
Renewal	£ 115
DVLA check	£ 5 (valid for 3 years)
DBS	£ 13 payable to DBS not Leeds City Council. If you have not renewed your DBS subscription or there is any change shown on your certificate, a further £70 will be payable to undertake a new DBS.
<b>Vehicle Application</b>	£120 excluding stickers
Set of vehicle stickers (no Bonnet)	£ 55
Set of vehicle stickers (with bonnet)	£ 70
Door sticker only	£ 25
Rear sticker only	£ 20
Bonnet sticker (additional ie lost / damaged)	£ 20
<b>Vehicle renewal (total fees)</b>	
Vehicle renewal	£ 115
Age criteria inspection	£ 80 ( if over 7 years old)
<b>Hackney carriage (total fees)</b>	
Driver application	£ 100
Local knowledge test	£ 50
Customer care course	£ 55 - not applicable if you passed this as a Private Hire driver
DBS	£ 70
Re-sit local knowledge test	£50

## **HC driver renewal (total fees)**

Driver renewal	£115
DVLA check	£ 5
DBS	£ 13

## **HC Vehicle application**

Vehicle Livery	£ 40
Rear Metal plate	£ 15

## **HC Vehicle renewal**

Age inspection criteria	£ 80 (over 7 years old)
Age inspections missed appointment	£ 60
Inspections missed appointment	£ 30
HC missed driver application appointment	£ 30
Meter check and seal	£ 10

## **Operator Application (total fees)**

Application	£ 400
DBS check	£ 70 (if you are using your DVLA license as one of the documents for DBS you will need to pay a £5 DVLA mandate fee)
English Comprehension Test	£ 25

## **Operator renewal (total fees)**

Operator renewal	£300
DBS	£ 13 (if the check shows that there has been a change, then the client will need to pay the full fee of £70)

## **OTHER fees**

Vehicle inspection (incl. failure to attend)	£ 30
Vehicle transfer (incl. inspection)	£ 60
Vehicle transfer	£ 30
Copy of Driver Badge	£ 10
Copy of Vehicle Disc	£ 10
Copy of licence	£ 5
DBS (failure to attend)	£ 30
Escort application	£ 25 application, £70 for DBS check & £5 DVLA mandate if using this doc as part of their DBS
Escort renewal	£ 25
Accident management / hire company (not their vehicles)	£ 30 application £70 DBS, £5 DVLA & £25 English and literature test
Contact Driver application	£ £60, plus £70 DB, £5 DVLA mandate
Contact Driver renewal	£ 50
Contact vehicle application	£ 65 / renewal is £55

## **Sundries**

No smoking stickers	£ 2.00
Lanyards, badge holders, windscreen disc holder	£ 1.00 eac