



***Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council***

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**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PUBLIC PROTECTION**

**TO A MEETING OF  
THE LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**17<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2005**

**REPORT CONCERNING TAXI LICENSING:  
INCREASE IN LICENCE FEES AND COSTS**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To place before Committee for their information and discussion a report concerning an application by the Taxi / Private Hire Licensing Department for an increase in License Fees and charges.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and approve the proposed increase in Fees and Charges.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Within budget: Yes.
- 3.2 The cost of placing an advertisement in a local newspaper within 28 days of approval of the fees.

**4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Within Council Policy: Not applicable.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Legal Services Consulted: Yes
- 5.2 Section 70 of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 permits the local authority powers to charge such fees for the grant of vehicle and operator licences as may be resolved by them from time to time.

**6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None.

**7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.1 None.

**8. WARD(S) AFFECTED**

8.1 All.

**9. CONSULTEES**

9.1 Taxi Liaison Group: Finance: Other Local Authorities:

**10. CONTACT OFFICER**

10.1 Bruce Corlett – Licensing and Enforcement Officer. Ext. 2682

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Tables of existing fees and recommended increases with benchmarking comparisons.

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**REPORT CONCERNING TAXI LICENSING:  
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**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing fees are set by Members to enable the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Department to carry out the duties delegated and authorised by the Committee and imposed by the legislation.
- 1.2 From time to time the fees are adjusted to cover the costs of carrying out, on behalf of the Authority, inspections of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and operators for the purpose of determining whether such licences should be granted and to cover any reasonable administrative or other costs in connection with the forgoing and with the control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.
- 1.3 The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Department has not implemented any increases in fees or charges since 2000.
- 1.4 There is a need by the Department to increase its revenue to cover the increases in costs, responsibility and controls placed upon it by the Government and Council.
- 1.5 The huge increase in issued licences to drivers, vehicles and bases has created an enormous upsurge in workload and has added extra responsibility on the limited staff.
- 1.6 Members will be aware that the Licensing Department moved to new premises in August 2004. The premises were an old Neighbourhood office and although they provided a much improved facility for customers and officers with immediate parking and cash reception area, the premises were in need of modernisation and required a severe upgrade in respect of security both inside and out.
- 1.7 The office has in the last six months recruited two new enforcement officers and supporting staff, with further recruitment likely.

- 1.8 In revising the cost implications to the trade, careful consideration has been given to limiting the increases in relation to individual drivers and vehicles licences. The table below shows the breakdown comparison with existing fees and proposed fees on a yearly / weekly basis.

TYPE OF LICENCE	EXISTING FEE	PROPOSED FEE
4 Monthly Vehicle Licence	£50.00	£75.00
4 Monthly Vehicle Licence	£50.00	£75.00
4 Monthly Vehicle Licence	£50.00	£75.00
12 Month Dual Licence	£65.00	£80.00
Yearly Cost Breakdown	<b>£215.00</b>	<b>£305.00</b>
Weekly Cost Breakdown	£ 4.13	£ 5.87
<b>Total Weekly Increase</b>	<b>£ 1.74</b>	

- 1.9 The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Department has looked at areas where work is done and does not at the present time make charges e.g. either administration duties or re issue of licensing paraphernalia. Both are time consuming and costly.
- 1.10 Members are aware of the DOT requirements in force from April 2005 concerning Hackney Carriages, and this Committee's decision to permit the de-restriction of numbers of those vehicles. It has always been that drivers in Walsall wanting a Hackney Carriage licence, because of the absence of a knowledge test, would initially have a private hire badge, holding that badge for three months before being considered for a licence to drive hackney carriages. This requirement will now be removed and replaced with a more vigorous examination designed to improve the general standards and knowledge of drivers in charge of hackney carriages.
- 1.11 The Licensing Department is aware of numerous improvements and changes within the trade and the present approved sets of conditions in force in the Borough are in need of reappraisal. A new set of Criteria and Conditions is being prepared. This will become part of the application process and presented in a booklet form to all new applicants, and existing licence holders.

1.12 The Licensing Department, as part of this modernisation and improvement, and in consultation with the Council's Road Safety Unit, is developing a training programme for all applicants, incorporating the following:-

- Conditions
- Law and Legislation
- Disability Awareness

This will incorporate a new two tier written and practical driving testing procedure for applicants for licences for drivers of both Hackney Carriage and private hire vehicles. This is intended to raise the profile of and improve the driving standards of new applicants.

1.13 This improved double test can also be considered for and directed towards existing drivers where Members/Officers feel that those drivers may benefit from such a course.

1.14 The Hackney Carriage and private hire industry are an integral part of the Walsall Transport Strategy that sets out how the Council wants to improve and develop the transport network across Walsall reducing the effects of congestion and encouraging economic growth, stimulating regeneration and improving the Borough.

1.15 The Taxi Licensing Office through its improvements is endeavouring to promote a nationally recognised standard of excellence in training, drivers and fleet. The office recognises that the fleet and drivers, licensed by the Borough are in many cases the first line for visitors to judge the town and what it has to offer.

1.16 The proposed improvements and upgrades are in line with the Council's **Priorities** and **Vision**:-

- i) Making it easier for people to get around
- ii) Ensuring people are safe and secure
- iii) Encouraging everyone to feel proud of Walsall.

1.17 A benchmarking exercise has been carried out with other local authorities, who are members of the West Midlands Taxi Forum. Set out below are the suggested areas where the Licensing Office can increase its cash flow to afford the officers the wherewithal to put into place these very important and necessary improvements to the service.

HACKNEY CARRIAVE VEHICLES	EXISTING FEE	PROPOSED FEE
Vehicle Application	£ 25.00	£ 25.00
Plate Transfer	£ 0.00	£ 20.00
New 12 Month Vehicle Licence	£160.00	£175.00

12 Month Vehicle Licence - Less than 3 years old	£150.00	£165.00
4 Monthly Vehicle Licence - Older than 3 years	£ 50.00	£ 75.00
New 4 Monthly Vehicle Licence – Older than 3 years	£ 60.00	£ 85.00

<b>PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES</b>	<b>EXISTING FEE</b>	<b>PROPOSED FEE</b>
Vehicle Application	£ 0.00	£ 25.00
Licence Transfer	£ 0.00	£ 20.00
New 12 Month Vehicle Licence – Less than 3 years old	£160.00	£175.00
New 4 Month Vehicle Licence – Older than 3 years	£ 60.00	£ 85.00
12 Month Vehicle Licence – Less than 3 years old	£150.00	£165.00
4 Monthly Vehicle Licence – Older than 3 years old	£ 50.00	£ 75.00
<b>DRIVER APPLICATIONS</b>		
Private Hire Driver Application	£ 25.00	£ 30.00
Hackney Carriage Driver Application	£ 25.00	£ 30.00
Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure Check	£ 42.00	£ 45.00
DVLA Mandate Disclosure	£ 5.00	£ 10.00
<b>DRIVER TRAINING</b>		
Private Hire Driver Training & Test	£ 0.00	£ 25.00
Hackney Carriage Driver Training	£ 0.00	£ 25.00
Hackney Carriage Knowledge Test	£ 25.00	£25.00
ADI Driving Examination	£ 15.00	£ 20.00
<b>DRIVER LICENSES</b>		
New 12 Month Private Hire Driver Licence	£ 60.00	£ 70.00
New 12 Month Hackney Carriage Driver Licence	£ 60.00	£ 70.00
New 12 Month Dual Licence	£ 65.00	£ 80.00

## **RENEWAL OF BASE OPERATOR LICENCE**

At present there is no discrimination between the small one vehicle operator and the large organisations running multiples of vehicles.

The Licence for each operator is set at £300 for initial application and £250 for each subsequent re grant.

It is proposed to vary this licence thus:-

<b>PRIVATE HIRE OPERATOR</b>	<b>EXISTING FEE</b>	<b>PROPOSED FEE</b>
Base Operator Application	£ 0.00	£ 50.00
New 12 Monthly Operator Licence - 1 / 2 Vehicles	£ 300.00	£350.00
New 12 Monthly Operator Licence – 3 or more vehicles	£300.00	£550.00
12 Monthly Operator Licence - 1 / 2 Vehicles	£250.00	£300.00
12 Monthly Operator Licence – 3 or more vehicles	£250.00	£500.00

<b>GENERAL LICENSING FEES</b>	<b>EXISTING FEE</b>	<b>POPOSED FEE</b>
Private Hire Plate Deposit	£ 0.00	£ 25.00
Hackney Carriage Plate Deposit	£ 0.00	£ 25.00
Replacement Rear Identification	£ 5.00	£ 10.00
Replacement Side Identification	£ 5.00	£ 10.00
Replacement Identification Badge	£ 5.00	£ 10.00
DVLA Mandate Disclosure	£ 5.00	£ 10.00
Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure	£ 42.00	£ 45.00

- 1.18 The proposed cost increases have been set following consultation with other boroughs (**see appended tables**) and with the trade and are commensurate with regard to the increase in overall costs necessary to perform the tasks required by the conditions and legislation governing the trade.
- 1.19 As part of the aims and targets for Taxi / Private Hire Licensing for 2005 / 2006, it is proposed to raise public awareness of the differences between Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriage Vehicles, via the media and website.
- 1.20 This report was presented to the Taxi/Private Hire Liaison Group on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2005 and recommended to this Committee.



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TABLE OF BASE OPERATORS LICENCES

LOCAL AUTHORITY	OPERATOR	NEW OPERATOR (1-2 VEHICLES)	REGRANT	NEW OPERATOR (3 or more vehicles)	REGRANT
Coventry	£500.00	£500.00	£400.00	£500.00	£400.00
Birmingham	£1155.00	£1155.00	£330.00	£1155.00	£660.00
Sandwell	£443 (1 year) £1190 (3 years)	£443 (1 year) £1190 (3 years)	£443 (1 year) £1190 (3 years)	£443 (1 year) £1190 (3 years)	£443 (1 year) £1190 (3 years)
Solihull					
Dudley	£312.00	£312.00	£312.00	£312.00	£312.00
Bromsgrove	£209.00	£209.00	£209.00	£209.00	£209.00
Wolverhampton	£910.00	£870.00	£663.00	£910.00	£663.00
Walsall	Present £300.00	£350.00	£300.00	£550.00	£500.00

**TABLE OF FEES & CHARGES**  
**LIST OF PROPOSED NEW FEES NOT IN BUDGET AT PRESENT TIME**

LOCAL AUTHORITY	TRANSFER OF VEHICLE LICENCES	PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE APPLICATION	BASE OPERATOR APPLICATION	PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER TRAINING	PH/HC PLATE DEPOSIT	REPLACEMENT LICENCE PLATE BRACKET	REPLACEMENT SIDE PLATE STICKERS	REPLACEMENT BADGES
Coventry	£20.00	£44.00	£39.00	£195.00	£20.00	£31.00	£10.00	£15.00
Birmingham	£33.00	Inc. of licence	Incl of licence	£112.50	N/A	£10.00	£10.00	£5.00
Sandwell	N/A	Inc of licence	Incl of licence	N/A	£30.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
Solihull	£28.00	Inc of licence	N/A	N/A	N/A	£17.00	£17.00	£17.00
Dudley	N/A	inc of licence	Inc of Licence	£58.00	£32.00	£32.00	N/A	£9.00
Bromsgrove	£18.00 per month	Inc of licence	Inc of licence	N/A	£20.00	£3.00	N/A	£2.20
Wolverhampton	N/A	Inc of licence	Inc of licence	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Walsall	£20.00	£25.00	£50.00	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00	£10.00	£10.00