

LICENSING COMMITTEE – 18TH SEPTEMBER 2007
Report of the Deputy Director of Partnerships and Customer Services

ITEM 5 HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE TAXI LICENSING – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO POLICY

1. Purpose of the Report

To consider proposals to add to and amend the policy in relation to hackney and private hire licensing.

2. Recommendation(s)

Committee is recommended to:

- (a) - approve the proposal that all Hackney and Private Hire drivers pass a Medical examination upon application for the grant, and for subsequent renewals, of drivers licences, with immediate effect;
- (b) - approve the proposal that the Drivers Licence fee be increased from £135 to £150, for a three year Licence, with effect from April 1st 2008;
- (c) – approve the proposal that the Vehicle Licence fee be increased from £105 to £120 per year, with effect from April 1st 2008;
- (d) Authorise the Deputy Director, Partnerships and Customer Services, to publicise details of the licence fee increased in a local newspapers as required by Section 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

3. Report (Reasons)

- (a) - The present requirement for drivers to pass a Medical Examination is set according to the age of the driver. Under new Legislation (Age Discrimination Regulations), this would be difficult to justify. Whilst the Council does not directly employ the drivers which it licences, it would seem to be appropriate to have regard to those regulations by adopting a procedure to require all drivers to undertake a medical examination upon application (as they do now) and then every 3 years, in line with the 3 yearly licence, Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, and Drivers and Vehicles Licensing Agency (DVLA) check. In the event of a driver suffering from some medical condition (e.g. Diabetes) then a yearly medical would be required. The procedure for this is already in place.
- (b) - The proposal is for the drivers licence fee to be increased to £150 from £135, which is to be implemented on April 1st 2008. This fee is for a 3 yearly drivers licence. The period of changeover from 1 yearly to 3 yearly licences has now expired, and there are no longer any one year driver's licences granted by the Council. This change was approved by Committee in June 2004. This makes the licence fee equivalent to £50 per year. As of February 2007, Charnwood Borough Council (of the 9 x Councils in Leicestershire) are 8th in the table of charges (only Melton Borough Council, who charge £44 per year, are cheaper).

The current fee of £135 for the 3 year Licence is equivalent to £45.00 per year. The increase of £5.00 will be the first increase since August 2004.

- (c) - The proposal is for a £15 per year increase in the Hackney and Private Hire Vehicle licence fee, taking the annual fee to £120. As of February 2007, the table of charges for the 9 x Councils in Leicestershire shows Charnwood to be 6th (alongside Hinckley & Bosworth: only Rutland at £103, and Melton at £66.50 are cheaper).

4. Background

- (a) - The current requirements are that medical examinations will be required at the renewal closest to the ages of 45, 50, 55, 60, and 70, and in any case no more than 5 years apart. Five years would seem excessive between a medical examination for any individual, let alone a person responsible for the safety of members of the Public. By adopting this proposal, there will be no opportunity for confusion as to when a medical examination would be required.
- (b) - The present level was set by the Committee at the Meeting of June 14th 2004. At that time the fee was increased from £40 to £50 per year, for those Drivers applying for a one year Licence. It was agreed that this fee would be frozen until 2007, to allow all drivers to convert to the 3 year licence. As explained above, this conversion time has now expired and all drivers are in possession of a 3 year licence. The fee set in June 2004 was actually increased to £135 for 3 years from £40 per year, so it increased in “real terms” by £5 per year.
- (c) - The current fee (£105) was implemented in August 2006. If this recommendation is granted, then it will have been nearly 2 years (21 months) since that fee increase. A fee increase of £15.00 is considered reasonable over this period. It represents a rise of just over 7% p.a. Taken with the proposed increase for drivers licences, the increase in income would amount to some £7,500 over a full year.

Background Papers:

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