



Ryedale District Council

REPORT TO: Community Services & Licensing Committee

DATE: 10 April 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Commercial Services Finance Manager
Beckie Bennett

SUBJECT: **OBJECTIONS TO HACKNEY CARRIAGE &
PRIVATE HIRE LICENCE FEES 08/09**

WARDS AFFECTED: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members that 26 objections (out of a possible 108) have been received to the proposed hackney carriage and private hire fees and charges for 2008/09.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that

1. Members note the objections received
2. Members decide whether or not to recommend a change to the existing policy, which aims to achieve a cost neutral taxi licensing service by the end of 2009/10, to the Policy and Resources Committee.
3. A review of the objections process together with the constitutional arrangements is carried out to streamline the setting of future licence fees and charges.

3.0 REASONS SUPPORTING DECISION

In 2005/06 a policy was adopted to achieve a cost neutral taxi licensing service over a 5-year period. Annual increases of at least 15% would be required to achieve this target, which are reviewed each year as part of the budget setting process.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND REPORT

This Committee approved the licence fees for 2008/09 on 29 November 2007. All fees have been increased by 15% in accordance with the current policy.

Following the publication of the public notice in the Gazette and Herald on 6 February 2008, a petition containing 24 signatures and 2 further written objections to the proposed licence fees have been received. The objections represent 24% of the total current licensed drivers.

5.0 OPTIONS

This Committee can make a decision under delegated powers to

- A) leave the licence fees as already approved or
- B) recommend a change to the current policy to Policy & Resources Committee.

Option A

If there is no amendment to the licence fees, the fees already approved will become effective without delay (as soon as is practical to administer).

Option B

If it is recommended that the current policy be referred to Policy and Resources Committee, the proposed fees, with or without modification will come into force on a date not later than 2 months from 5th March 2008.

6.0 OPTION APPRAISAL

All licence fees have been increased by 15% for 2008/09 in accordance with the current policy to achieve a cost neutral service by the end of 2009/10.

The increase represents additional total income of £6,580, based on existing licence levels.

It should also be noted that each year as part of setting the fees and charges, the performance of the taxi licensing service including the number of licences issued is reviewed against the policy target, and the fees set accordingly. Since the policy was introduced there has not been a detrimental effect on the number of licences being issued.

To provide an example, the most expensive licence is a vehicle licence, which has increased from £290 to £334 per year (15% increase equivalent to £44).

Another issue, which emerges, is current duplication by this Committee when setting the licence fees and the delay to implementing the new charges when objections are received. This is the third time objections have been received due to dissatisfaction with the current policy and it is recommended that the objection process is reviewed together with the constitutional arrangements, to consider the possibility of a more effective and streamlined approach to decision making.

Copies of the objections received are attached for Members consideration.

7.0 FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Any amendment to the proposed licence fees will have an effect on the 2008/09 budgets. The current budgeted increase equates to £6,580 (5% increase is equivalent to £2,190 additional revenue based on assumed levels of licence renewals).

8.0 RISK

The Council needs to consider its licence fees against the market to ensure risk is balanced reasonably and customers are being charged a fair price for services.

9.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed licence fees for 2008/09 have been set in accordance with current policy. Due to the receipt of objections to the proposed fees Members need to decide whether the fees are implemented in line with existing policy or a recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee is made to amend the current policy.

It is also concluded that a review of the objections process is undertaken together with the constitutional arrangements to ensure effective decision making arrangements are in place when setting future licence fees.

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