



Ryedale District Council

REPORT TO: Community Services & Licensing Committee

DATE: 25 September 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Finance Manager Street Scene
Beckie Bennett

SUBJECT: Taxi Licensing Task Group Update

WARDS AFFECTED: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the outcomes of the Taxi Licensing Task Group meeting and seek guidance on the current policy to assist with preparing proposed fees and charges for 2009/10.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members

- (a) note the feedback and work in progress of the Task Group;
- (b) agree the policy principles to be used as the basis for the future assessment of fees and charges

3.0 BACKGROUND/REASONS SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION

Following this Committee's approval in July, a joint meeting of the task group and representatives of the taxi working group was held on 20 August 2008.

The task group objective is to review fees and charges and make recommendations back to this Committee in preparation for the 2009/10 budget.

4.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The current policy aims to achieve a cost neutral taxi licensing service by the end of 2009/10.

5.0 REPORT AND KEY ISSUES

The key issues for consideration are

COMMUNITY SERVICES & LICENSING COMMITTEE

25 September 2008

- ⇒ the present aims of the taxi licensing service and the contribution the service makes to the Council's corporate objectives
- ⇒ increased costs of providing the taxi licensing service and the impact on the achievement of the current policy
- ⇒ there is little scope to reduce the costs of the service
- ⇒ dissatisfaction with the current policy expressed through regular appeals
- ⇒ the current policy has had no adverse affect on the number of licences being issued
- ⇒ Ryedale's licence fees are high compared to other authorities

A copy of the task group presentation has previously been circulated to Members

Other specific issues raised by the working group representatives were

- ⇒ Understanding why the Council was targeting this particular group who provide a service to Ryedale residents, with a policy to recover the total cost of providing the service and was there another service with the same policy objective?
- ⇒ In a rural area like Ryedale there is a lot of "dead" mileage which makes it more difficult to recover increasing costs such as licence fees and fuel through the fares.
- ⇒ Understanding why the Council supports other community transport initiatives but not the taxi service i.e. Ryecat.

The actions agreed by the task group were

1. To examine the licence fees compared with other authorities belonging to the family group and also neighbouring councils and
2. To undertake a survey of all licensed vehicles to gather more detailed information on the service being provided to the community.

A copy of the survey is attached and the results will be available at the meeting.

Due to the tight timescales it was not possible to arrange a further task group meeting to consider the information requested therefore it was agreed to feedback to this Committee meeting and then meet in

October to agree recommendations which would be included in the proposed fees and charges at the meeting in November.

However, to assist with the review the views of this Committee are requested based on the information available to provide guidance to the task group on a preferred way forward with the policy for the taxi licensing service.

6.0 OPTIONS

In order to assist with the preparation of the proposed fees and charges for 2009/10, which will be presented to this Committee in November, Members have the options to

- a. Retain the current breakeven policy and apply a 15% increase to fees as in previous years however this would also result in an extension to the original timeframe by 2 years
- b. Retain the current breakeven policy and the original target date for achievement (2009/10) which would require an increase to fees of 39%
- c. Recommend a change to the current policy to bring future increases to fees in line with the Council's financial policy to maximise income with a minimum increase of 5%
- d. Recommend a change to the current policy to freeze fees in 2009/10 pending a review of the service aims and the development of a new policy.

7.0 RESULT OF OPTION APPRAISAL

All options are likely to be influenced by the ongoing review work however it would be beneficial to obtain Members views in order to ease the task of proposing fees and charges for next year.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The options present a range of financial implications for the Council however the maximum net "gain" for the general fund would be in the region of £12,000 if the current policy remains unchanged to achieve a cost neutral position.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

The risk of setting fees to high could result in drivers not renewing their licence and would potentially increase dissatisfaction with the Council's policy and have a negative impact on the community (however this has not been the effect to date).

A change to the current policy could have a budget implication for 2009/10 and future years.

10.0 CONCLUSION

Work is currently underway reviewing the taxi licensing fees and charges and gathering information to enable to taxi licensing Member task group to make recommendations on the future policy for the service. Guidance from Committee is required to assist the setting of proposed fees and charges for 2009/10 and any changes to the current policy which may or may not be required as part of the process.

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Beckie Bennett, Finance Manager Streetscene or Laural Huntington, Taxi Licensing Officer if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officers can be contacted at Malton Depot
Telephone No 01653-600666 ext 473 or 474
e-mail: beckie.bennett@ryedale.gov.uk
or laural.Huntington@ryedale.gov.uk