

## Taxi fee review 2018 – Consultation comments and responses

During the consultation period 4 comments on the proposed taxi licensing fees were received. The comments relevant to the consultation are summarised below with responses to the specific issue raised. Comments not considered relevant to the fee consultation have not been responded to within this report.

Date received	Received from	Consultation Comment	Consultation response
21 <sup>st</sup> February 2018		A hackney carriage vehicle licence is £300. Private hire vehicle licences should be cheaper because they do not have meters and should follow all private hire rules.	The costs of reviewing and processing a hackney carriage and a private hire vehicle licence application are the same. No audit of the hackney carriage meter is carried out by the Licensing Authority and therefore this does not affect the fee charged.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		Private hire vehicles should get a reduction of at least 50% on the licence fee for hybrid cars as these are environmentally friendly and the Council should be promoting this. Other licensing authorities take this approach.	We have considered introducing reduced licence fees for hybrid vehicles as we are keen to promote the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles in the Vale. However we have received advice that a vehicle licence fee should cover the associated costs of issuing the licence and that it would not be appropriate and may not be legally sound to discount the licence fee to incentivise the use of these vehicles. However we will continue to explore ways that we can promote the use of cleaner and environmentally friendly vehicles by the trade.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		Drivers badges for private hire drivers should be cheaper as they are different to hackney carriage drivers badges.	The costs to the licensing authority of reviewing and processing a hackney carriage driver licence and private hire driver licence are the same. Licensing Committee have approved the introduction of a knowledge test, safeguarding training and an English language test for all driver applicants which will come into affect this year. These are likely to be provided by external agencies and not directly by AVDC and payment for these tests and training will be made directly to the provider by the applicant.

4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		Red hackney carriage feels that £300 for a hackney carriage vehicle licence is still quite high compared to other licensing authorities	Consideration was given of the full costs to AVDC associated with the provision of a hackney carriage vehicle licence and the hackney carriage vehicle fee that was arrived at reflects these costs. The proposed fee is lower than the current fee and reflects reduced costs to AVDC as a result of the new online application and back office system and the booking system. Processes and costs differ in different licensing authorities dependent upon how they run their licensing service and what their fees include and do not include as per their taxi licensing policies.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		We have been told before that the fee should go down as soon as everything goes online e.g. online applications. This happened a long time ago but we are still paying the same fee.	The proposed fees for operators and vehicles are lower than the current vehicle and operator fees and do reflect the introduction of new online application and back office computer systems. We are still in the process of implementing further changes to the online application and back office computer system that should further reduce the manual administration activity required to process and issue a licence. Once the system is fully implemented and working effectively then we will review the fees again to consider whether or not they need to change.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		The fee should be fair and transparent and should be a 'one tariff fee' and should not be different for vehicles less than 6 years old or more than 6 years old.	Licensing Committee approved a single age limit for vehicles on 6 March 2017. The proposed fees reflect this policy change and detail a licence fee for a vehicle that is the same for any vehicle up to 10 years old.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		Prices are still very high and there should be further consultation with the trade on their point of view.	The proposed fees reflect the cost of delivering the relevant licensing service. The legislative framework allows the Licensing Authority to recover the costs of the provision of the service and the proposed fees do this and no more. Whilst we appreciate that the trade would like prices to be lower, if prices are reduced further then the fees would not cover the cost of the service. Any shortfall would need to be met using other sources of Council income such as

			<p>Council Tax; it is unreasonable for residents or other businesses to effectively subsidise the commercial activities of others.</p> <p>We are still in the process of implementing further changes to the online application and back office computer system that should further reduce the manual administration activity required to process an issue a licence. Once the system is fully implemented and working effectively then we will review the fees again to consider whether or not they need to change. If changes are proposed then there would be further consultation with the trade.</p>
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		We believe there is less admin work as compared previously with the face to face meeting as everything is online and it is easier to fill in the application form	<p>Whilst the online application process has made it easier for applicants to apply for a licence the administration associated with the back office computer system has not reduced significantly. We are still in the process of implementing further changes to the online application and back office computer system that should further reduce the manual administration activity required to process an issue a licence. Once the system is fully implemented and working effectively then we will review the fees again to consider whether or not they need to change.</p>
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		You have not covered the 1 <sup>st</sup> time vehicle retest and 2 <sup>nd</sup> time vehicle retest fee – these need to be considered as well.	<p>Vehicle test and retest fees are set by the Pembroke Road testing centre and adhere to the guidelines set out by the DVLA regarding testing and retest fees. The MOT testing fees charged by the Pembroke Road test centre to the Licensing Authority are directly incorporated into the vehicle application fee with no adjustment. Where a vehicle fails an MOT, fees for retest are charged in line with DVLA guidelines on when a fee should be charged and how much that fee should be. More information on MOT testing fees can be found at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/getting-an-mot/retests">https://www.gov.uk/getting-an-mot/retests</a></p>

4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		A full range of suggested alternative fees was provided for the licensing authority to consider instead of the proposed fees	The suggested alternative fees do not reflect the costs of the provision of the relevant licensing service. The legislative framework allows the Licensing Authority to recover the costs of the provision of the service and the proposed fees do this and no more. Whilst we appreciate that the trade would like prices to be lower, if prices are reduced further then the fees will not cover the cost of the service. Any shortfall would need to be met using other sources of Council income such as Council Tax; it is unreasonable for residents or other businesses to effectively subsidise the commercial activities of others.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		Private hire vehicle owners who have more than one vehicle should be given a discount	The cost to the Licensing Authority of reviewing and processing a vehicle licence application does not decrease as a result of an owner having more than one vehicle. It is therefore not appropriate to offer a discount to owners of more than one vehicle. The legislative framework allows the Licensing Authority to recover the costs of the provision of the service and the proposed fees do this and no more. Whilst we appreciate that the trade would like prices to be lower, if prices are reduced further then the fees will not cover the cost of the service. Any shortfall would need to be met using other sources of Council income such as Council Tax; it is unreasonable for residents or other businesses to effectively subsidise the commercial activities of others.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		We now only have to take the vehicle to the garage once (instead of twice per year) saving council and admin work. The fee is still too high and doesn't reflect this.	The proposed fee covers the cost of the MOT test and enhanced taxi test. The proposed vehicle licence fees are lower than current fees.
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		The proposed fees do not state whether the drivers licence new and renewal fees include or do not include the cost of the DBS check	At the point of application the cost of the DBS check is added to the licensing fee and collected from the applicant as is the case with the current fee framework. The DBS

			<p>fees are detailed separately because the DBS service is provided to AVDC by an external provider and prices are liable to change. This is not something that AVDC have any control over or which we can set through the licensing regime.</p>
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2018		<p>Could we allow the payment of the operator licence fee in 3 instalments over 1, 3 and 5 years as the fee is high and some people can't afford to pay it all in one go</p>	<p>The legislative framework indicates that the fee charged must be paid at the point of application. Without a fee a licence application is deemed invalid. The legal position is that 5 year operator licences are the norm , however the Licensing Authority has a discretion to grant licences for a shorter period <b>as may be appropriate in the individual circumstances of the case.</b></p> <p>The implication is that the discretion to grant shorter period licences arises because of a matter that comes to light during the determination process and should be treated as exceptional and determined by the circumstances of the individual case, rather than as a blanket policy. As such it is not appropriate to routinely offer a shorter licence period or to provide for staged payments.</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> February 2018		<p>I object to the removal of the shorter period for the private hire operators licence. If there is only a single 5 year licence at £677 then this is a considerable sum to be paid in one go by small operators. If a single licence period is to be the only option, then perhaps this could be split to paying £67.70 a month for 10 months or another combination (3 months, 6 months) over a period of time during the first year of the licence period.</p>	<p>The ability to issue a 1 year operators licence was removed by the Deregulation Act 2015 on 1 October 2015</p> <p>The legislative framework indicates that the fee charged must be paid at the point of application. Without a fee a licence application is deemed invalid. The legal position is that 5 year operator licences are the norm , however the Licensing Authority has a discretion to grant licences for a shorter period <b>as may be appropriate in the individual circumstances of the case.</b></p> <p>The implication is that the discretion to grant shorter period licences arises because of a matter that comes to light</p>

			during the determination process and should be treated as exceptional and determined by the circumstances of the individual case, rather than as a blanket policy. As such it is not appropriate to routinely offer a shorter licence period or to provide for staged payments.
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2018		I am fundamentally against increases in the fees because I cannot see how the Licensing team provide any value or services to the taxi and private hire community	<p>The proposed fees reduce the cost of both vehicle and operator applications from the current fee rate. The cost of driver licence applications has increased and reflects the additional checks and administration associated with changes introduced by the De-Regulation Act 2015. The legislative framework allows the Licensing Authority to recover the costs of the provision of the service and the proposed fees do this and no more. Whilst we appreciate that the trade would like prices to be lower, if prices are reduced further then the fees will not cover the cost of the service. Any shortfall would need to be met using other sources of Council income such as Council Tax; it is unreasonable for residents or other businesses to effectively subsidise the commercial activities of others.</p> <p>Comments, complaints or suggestions about improvements to the services the Council provides should be made through our Compliments, Comments and Complaints process via our website at <a href="https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/section/comments-compliments-or-complaints">https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/section/comments-compliments-or-complaints</a></p>
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2018		You have failed to provide any justification for the price increase. Perhaps if you provided some justification then it might be easier to see why you want to increase prices	The proposed fees reduce the cost of both vehicle and operator applications from the current fee rate. The cost of driver licence applications has increased and reflects the additional checks and administration associated with changes introduced by the De-Regulation Act 2015. A report on the methodology to support the proposed fees was presented to Environment and Living Scrutiny

			<p>Committee on the 19 December 2017 and a report was taken to Licensing Committee on the 15 January 2018. These meetings are open to the public and the report papers are publically available on our website.</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2018		You only detail the new costs. It would be good to show the current scale of costs and the proposed scale of costs for comparison then we can all see what the implications are.	<p>The consultation documents which were available on the AVDC website detailed the proposed fees. Current fees are available on our website at <a href="https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/taxi-licensing-fees">https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/taxi-licensing-fees</a></p> <p>A report on the methodology to support the proposed fees was presented to Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee on the 19 December 2017 and a report was taken to Licensing Committee on the 15 January 2018. These meetings are open to the public and the report papers (detailing proposed and current fees) are publically available on our website.</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2018		Even if there are valid objections it wouldn't seem to matter as you will force the price increases on the 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2018 if not the 1 <sup>st</sup> April	<p>As consultation comments were received during the consultation period the fee increases did not come into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Consultation comments will be presented to Licensing Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018 at which point the Committee can either implement the fees as proposed or seek to vary them.</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2018		Why do you only list private hire operators 5 year licence? Presumably because this fee has changed and the option of a one year licence still exists at the old price?	<p>The ability to issue a 1 year operators licence was removed by Deregulation Act 2015 on 1 October 2015</p> <p>The legislative framework indicates that the fee charged must be paid at the point of application. Without a fee a licence application is deemed invalid. The legal position is that 5 year operator licences are the norm, however the Licensing Authority has a discretion to grant licences for a shorter period <b>as may be appropriate in the individual circumstances of the case.</b></p>

			<p>The implication is that the discretion to grant shorter period licences arises because of a matter that comes to light during the determination process and should be treated as exceptional and determined by the circumstances of the individual case, rather than as a blanket policy. As such it is not appropriate to routinely offer a shorter licence period or to provide for staged payments.</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> February 2018		<p>You may have saved money by implementing a new computer system but we have not seen any reduction in costs even though you may have benefitted from it.</p>	<p>Whilst the online application process has made it easier for applicants to apply for a licence, the administration associated with the back office computer system has not reduced significantly. We are still in the process of implementing further changes to the online application and back office computer system that should further reduce the manual administration activity required to process and issue a licence. Once the system is fully implemented and working effectively then we will review the fees again to consider whether or not they need to change. The Council is not legally permitted to make a profit from licensing fees. Fees are 'ring fenced' and any surplus or deficit is taken into account when setting subsequent years' fees.</p>