

SUBJECT:	Consultation Responses to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Fees
REPORT OF:	Officer Management Team - Director of Services
	Prepared by - Head of Healthy Communities

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To allow Members to consider the responses received during the 28 day consultation period concerning the proposed fees in relation to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 2.1 There is a link between an effective licensing regime for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles, Drivers and Operator and the Council's policy objective for Safe Communities.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 21 January 2015, the Licensing Committee considered a report regarding the proposed increase in fees for hackney carriage and private hire licensing. The report explained the legislative background and the requirement to advertise proposed increases in fees for 28 days. The Committee approved the proposed fees, shown in Appendix 1 attached to this report and authorised the 28 day consultation exercise.

4. Discussion

- 4.1 A public notice was placed in the Buckinghamshire Advertiser and the Slough Express on 29 and 30 January 2015, and also on the Council's website giving until 27 February for any objections to be sent to the Council's Licensing team. All of the affected Licence holders have also been advised of the notice by text message, which is the Council's usual method of communicating with them in relation to their licences. On 24 February an all-day drop in session was held for existing licensees to discuss the proposed fees with the Licensing team so that they could make an informed decision whether they wished to formally object, this was attended by 12 out of 174 South Bucks drivers.
- 4.2 The Council received 10 responses all of which were from South Bucks Licensees during the consultation period which are attached in Appendix 2. All of these responses object to the proposed increases.
- 4.4 Summary of responses received
- 4.4.1 The responses to the fees generally object to increases due to the views that there is a lack of sufficient Taxi ranks being provided, and that too many licences are issued by the Council and this is making it difficult for drivers and operators to make

a living. Some respondents also pointed to the difference between inflation rates and fee increases as reasons for objecting. A stepped approach to introducing the larger fee increases was also put forward in relation to reducing the impact on existing Licensees

4.4.2 Other concerns raised were the financial impact on drivers arising from proposed fees and also impact on recruitment of drivers for operators.

4.5 Officer observations from responses

4.5.1 There are a number of inaccuracies contained within responses that have been received. In particular some responses have suggested that fees can only be charged for the upkeep of Taxi ranks and this is not the case. However, the calculated fees do not include any costs for stands.

4.5.2 Several responses also state that the fees can only be increased in line with inflation and this is not correct.

4.5.3 Paragraph 5 in responses 10 and 6 implies that evening licensing work has solely been conducted by the Police. This is not the case, The Licensing Section has been out in the evenings on 9 occasions in the past 11 months.

4.5.4 Some issues that have been raised such as the requirement to operate disability accessible vehicles and the difficulty of the Knowledge test that applicants are required to pass do not link directly to the consultation on fees and will be considered separately by the Licensing team.

4.5.5 Positive feedback was received from some members of the trade with regards to the consultation, particularly the drop-in session that took place and it was felt that this was an improvement on previous years.

5. Resource, Risk and other Implications

5.1 There is no additional risk further to those highlighted in the report received by the Committee on 21 January.

5.2 There will be a resource implication if Members resolve to make any changes to the proposed fees and if fees are reduced then this will effect the level of cost recovery achieved by the Council for carrying out its licensing functions.

5.3 If members were to consider an incremental increase in some fees following responses to the consultation. The resource implication to this would be that the income split between the Council and Chiltern District Council would need to be reassessed to ensure that one council does not subsidise another.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 To consider the responses and objections received following consultation on the proposed fees for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing.
- 6.2 To set the fees with or without modification to come into effect on 2 April 2015.

Officer Contact:	Nathan March 01494 732056 nmarch@chiltern.gov.uk
Background Papers:	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Fees Licensing Committee report dated 21 January 2015