

Taxi licensing fees consultation: report on results

Introduction

Buckinghamshire Council has undertaken an online consultation for new taxi licencing fees which are being set as part of the new Buckinghamshire Council Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy agreed earlier this year

The law requires that a statutory 28 day consultation must take place for any increase in vehicle and private hire operator licence fees. Adverts were published in newspapers throughout the Council area to notify of the new proposed fees.

The Council is also consulting on the proposed driver fees. All licence holders have been informed of the proposed new fees and taxi trade representatives have also been invited to attend a question and answer session to answer any queries or discuss any concerns in relation to the proposed fees.

The proposed fees were considered by the Council's Licensing and Regulatory Committee and were approved for consultation purposes at a meeting on the 14 April 2021.

The online consultation opened on 31 May 2021 and closed on 7 July 2021.

The consultation focused on the opportunity for respondents to comment on the proposal consultation through a free text question.

The consultation received 81 responses [out of just over 3,000 licensed drivers licensed by the Council]

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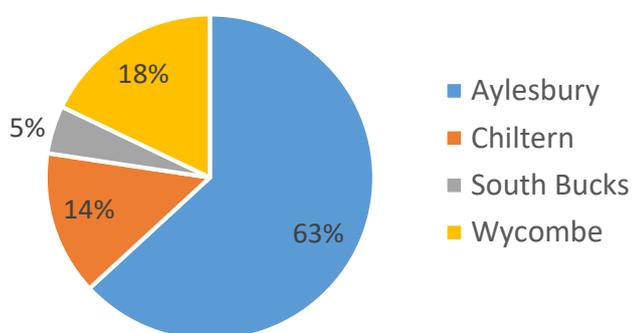
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Respondents by licensing area

Respondents were asked which of the Council areas they were licenced by. Respondents may be licenced in more than one area therefore the total number is higher than the 81 respondents.

| Responses by licensing area | Number | % |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Aylesbury | 53 | 63.1% |
| Chiltern | 12 | 14.3% |
| South Bucks | 4 | 4.8% |
| Wycombe | 15 | 17.9% |
| Total | 84 | 100.0% |

Responses by licensing area %



The high percentage of respondents from the Aylesbury area reflects the overall area profile for taxi licences where the vast majority are in Aylesbury.

Respondents by licence

Respondents were asked which of the following licence(s) they held. Respondents may hold more than one type of licence therefore the total number is higher than the 81 responses.

| Type of licence held | Number | % |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Driver | 63 | 56.8% |
| Private hire operator | 21 | 18.9% |
| Vehicle licence holder | 27 | 24.3% |
| Total | 111 | 100.0% |

Respondents were asked additionally what type of licence they held as drivers: "If you are a licensed driver, what type of licence do you hold?"

| Licensed driver | Number | % |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Hackney carriage | 13 | 16.0% |
| Joint private hire and hackney carriage | 28 | 34.6% |
| Private hire | 38 | 46.9% |
| n/a | 2 | 2.5% |
| Total | 81 | 100.0% |

Response to the proposed fees: support or disagreement

As anticipated, due to the increase in fees in some areas, there was a majority of respondents (88% of respondents) disagreeing with the proposed fees

| Response | Number | % |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Support | 5 | 6.2% |
| Disagreement | 71 | 87.7% |
| N/A | 5 | 6.2% |
| Total | 81 | 100.0% |

Response by area

Support for the new fees was only from those licenced in the Aylesbury area, there were no expressions of support from other areas.

| Area | Support | | Disagreement | | N/A | | Total |
|--------------------|---------|----|--------------|------|--------|----|-----------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | |
| Aylesbury | 5 | 9% | 43 | 81% | 5 | 9% | 53 |
| Chiltern | 0 | 0% | 12 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 12 |
| South Bucks | 0 | 0% | 4 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 4 |
| Wycombe | 0 | 0% | 15 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 15 |

Response by role

Support was distributed across the roles but with a clear majority in disagreement.

NB Respondents may hold more than one type of licence therefore the total number is higher than the 81 responses.

| Role | Support | | Disagreement | | N/A | | Total |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------|--------------|-------|-----|------|-----------|
| Driver | 4 | 6.3% | 57 | 90.5% | 2 | 3.2% | 63 |
| Private hire operator | 2 | 9.5% | 18 | 85.7% | 1 | 4.8% | 21 |
| Vehicle licence holder | 5 | 18.5% | 20 | 74.1% | 2 | 7.4% | 27 |

Response by driver role

| | Support | | Disagreement | | N/A | | Total |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|-----|--------------|------|-----|----|-----------|
| Hackney Carriage | 0 | 0% | 12 | 92% | 1 | 8% | 13 |
| Private Hire | 4 | 11% | 31 | 82% | 3 | 8% | 38 |
| Joint private hire and hackney carriage | 1 | 4% | 26 | 93% | 1 | 4% | 28 |
| N/A | 0 | 0% | 2 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 2 |

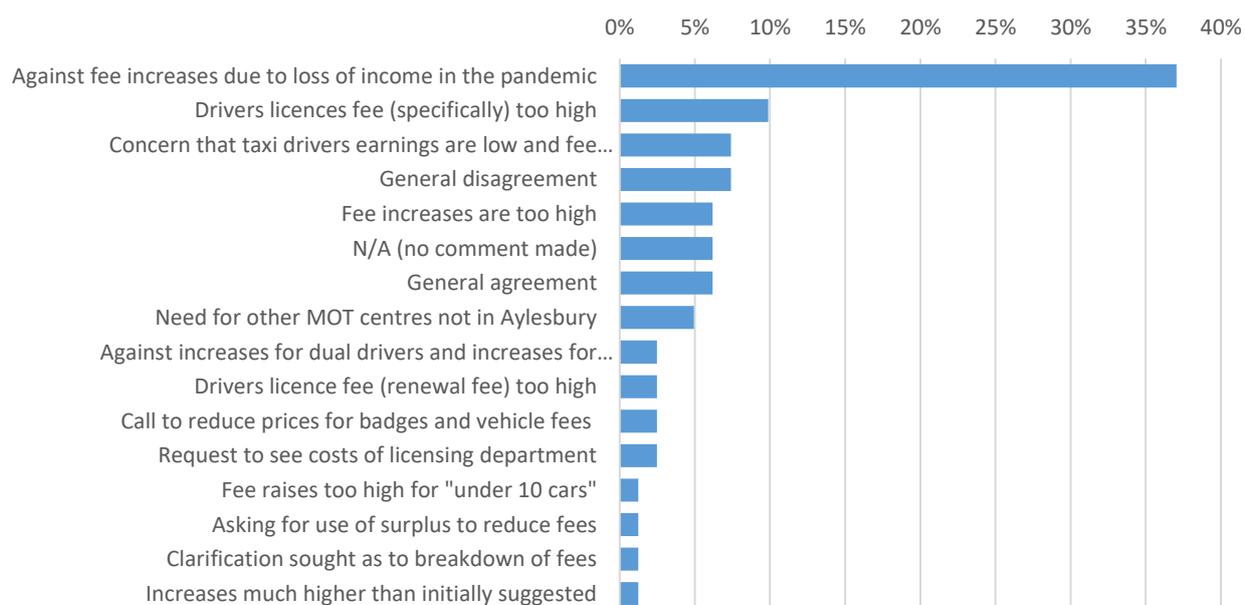
Free text analysis

Respondents were asked to submit comments regarding the proposed fees. The comments were grouped by theme and analysed as an overall cohort of respondents, together with analysis by area and by types of licences held.

[Full set of responses](#)

| Free text comment by theme | Number | % |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Against fee increases due to loss of income in the pandemic | 30 | 37.0% |
| Drivers licences fee (specifically) too high | 8 | 9.9% |
| Concern that taxi drivers earnings are low and fee increases are too high | 6 | 7.4% |
| General disagreement | 6 | 7.4% |
| Fee increases are too high | 5 | 6.2% |
| N/A (no comment made) | 5 | 6.2% |
| General agreement | 5 | 6.2% |
| Need for other MOT centres not in Aylesbury | 4 | 4.9% |
| Against increases for dual drivers and increases for renewals | 2 | 2.5% |
| Drivers licence fee (renewal fee) too high | 2 | 2.5% |
| Call to reduce prices for badges and vehicle fees | 2 | 2.5% |
| Request to see costs of licensing department | 2 | 2.5% |
| Fee raises too high for "under 10 cars" | 1 | 1.2% |
| Asking for use of surplus to reduce fees | 1 | 1.2% |
| Clarification sought as to breakdown of fees | 1 | 1.2% |
| Increases much higher than initially suggested | 1 | 1.2% |
| Total | 81 | 100.0% |

Free text comments by theme



Free text themes: commentary

Overall

- An expression of disagreement with the increased fees due to loss of earnings during the Covid 19 pandemic was the top theme by a considerable margin.
- There was also concern expressed that taxi driver earnings were low and the fee increases were too high – comments themed in this category did not refer specifically to the impact of the pandemic but it might be assumed that some at least were referring to recent loss of earnings in the pandemic.
- There were some comments made specifically around the increases in drivers' licence fees, again this would have been expected given the increase across the board
- Those expressing general support did not expand on the reasons for their support

Differences by area

- Points made around disagreement with the increased fees due to loss of earnings during the Covid 19 pandemic were the top theme in every area, again by a considerable margin.
- A request that MOT centres be available in areas other than Aylesbury was expressed in Chiltern and in Wycombe areas.
- Expressions of general agreement was only found in the Aylesbury area
- There were a number of expressions of general disagreement where it was not possible to categorize these more specifically

By role

- Points made against the increased fees due to the loss of earnings during the Covid 19 pandemic were the top theme for all roles responding