



Report to Licensing (Regulatory) Committee

Date:	11 th April 2023
Title:	Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Fees and Charges
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Mark Winn, Cabinet Member for Homelessness & Regulatory Services
Contact Officer:	Lindsey Vallis, Service Director – Transport Services
Ward(s) affected:	None specific

Recommendations: **That the proposed fees and charges set out at Appendix A are agreed and take effect on 24th April 2023.**

Reason for decision: If taxi and private hire licensing is not a cost neutral service paid for from licence fee income the financial burden will fall to the wider taxpayer. Fees and charges should increase so as to cover the wider costs of providing the service.

1. Background

- 1.1 Taxi and private hire licensing fees can only be set at levels to recover such costs as are prescribed in law. The Council cannot make a profit from licence fees and any shortfall in revenue, if not met by licence fee payers, must be borne by the Council as a whole. In practice, this means that the costs of the Service should ideally be covered entirely by taxi licensing fee income into the Council. Any surplus or deficit must be carried forward and form part of any subsequent review of fees.
- 1.2 In July 2021 taxi and private hire fees and charges were last approved as part of the implementation of a new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy for Buckinghamshire, which came into effect in September 2021. The Licensing Service also went through the Better Buckinghamshire programme in 2021 and new structures for a harmonised Licensing Service, organised by specialism rather than geographical location, came into effect from the 1st September 2021. This created a single taxi and private hire licensing service serving the whole of Buckinghamshire and operating under the new Policy.

- 1.3 Since September 2021 the Taxi Licensing service has delivered Policy changes as well as improvements in systems and processes which have required significant resource to deliver. The service has also moved to a single back-office system and redesigned the way that the service is provided. Having undertaken significant implementation and improvement work, the service is now stable and operating in a business-as-usual fashion.
- 1.4 The changes have included implementation of the Department for Transport (DfT) [Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards](#), which were introduced in July 2020 and aim to protect children and vulnerable adults from exploitation. The Statutory Standards introduced significant additional requirements for local authorities carrying out taxi and private hire licensing functions. Government was clear at the time of introduction that it was anticipated that local authorities would seek to cover the costs of these additional requirements from driver licence fees¹.
- 1.5 Following a full budget review of the taxi and private hire licensing service between September and December 2022, the Committee received a report on the budget position for taxi and private hire licensing at the meeting of the 1st February 2023 which included the table below:

	Base Budget 2022- 23 £	Forecast Budget 2022- 23 £	Underspend/Overspend +/- £
Employee Costs	977,057	845,705	-131,352
Running Expenses	80,420	103,089	22,669
Taxi Licensing Income	-1,057,477	-848,596	208,881
Budget Total +/-	0	100,198	Overspend 100,198

¹ UK Parliament – [question put to Rachel Maclean](#) On the 27th April 2021 a question relating to the statutory standards and their financial impact on the trade was put to the Secretary of State for Transport. In response Rachel Maclean MP stated, “A full impact assessment was published alongside the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards in July 2020. This found that if the full cost of the Standards was passed on to drivers, the increased cost would be £62.24 per driver per year which would equate to a three pence increase per fare.”

- 1.6 This report advised that the 2022/23 end of year forecast budget position was an overspend position of £100k. Vacancies within the service had been proactively managed over several months relative to the ongoing budget forecast position, and as a result there was a 13.5% forecast underspend on employee costs over the 2022/23 period of £131k. However, application income into the services was 19.8% lower than anticipated and therefore the underspend on employee costs did not fully mitigate this budget impact. Additionally, running costs had increased by 28.2% over this period, in part reflecting increased supplier costs.
- 1.7 The taxi licensing service has recently undertaken formal consultation with staff within the service on structural changes which will reduce salary overheads by £146K. The new structure will be implemented from the 1st May 2023. Whilst these savings will assist in returning the service to a cost neutral position there remains the need to increase fee income into the service.
- 1.8 The Council cannot make a profit from licence fees and any surplus or deficit should be carried forward and recovered from the licensed trade over a rolling 3-year period. This means that the £100k overspend at year end for 2022/23 should be recovered across the next 3-year period and the review of fees and charges has incorporated this requirement.
- 1.9 In order to ensure and sustain a cost neutral budget position where cost recovery adequately funds the service a combination of measures are required. This includes:
- reducing overheads within the taxi and private hire licensing service as far as is possible to reflect current demand levels (this has been primarily addressed through a reduction in headcount within the service see paragraph 1.5 above), and
 - increasing fees and charges to the licensed trade.

Whilst the Service is very mindful of the impacts of an increase in fee levels to the licensed trade, fees should increase to cover the costs of the service, or costs will be borne by the taxpayer.

- 1.10 This report seeks the approval of proposed fee levels following a full consultation process, including required statutory advertising. If approved, the proposed fees and charges will take effect on the 24th April 2023.

2. Main content of report

- 2.1 Fee review should be kept under annual review and a full review should be undertaken regularly and at least every 3 years to ensure that fees and charges are set at an appropriate level. Taxi and private hire licensing fees can only be set at levels to recover such costs as are prescribed in law. The Council cannot make a profit from licence fees and any shortfall in revenue, if not met by licence fee payers,

must be borne by the Council as a whole. In practice, this means that the costs of the Service should be covered entirely by taxi licensing fee income into the Council. Any surplus or deficit must be carried forward and form part of any subsequent review of fees.

- 2.2 The relevant legal provisions are set out in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 ('the Act') and specifically section 53(2) with respect to driver licences and section 70 in relation to vehicle and operator licences, both of which permit the recovery of a reasonable fee for the grant of a licence.
- 2.3 Regulation 2(6) of the Local Authority (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 requires that where a charge is made for any such approval, consent, licence, permit or registration, the amount of the charge, is not to be the responsibility of an executive of the authority. As a result, fee setting for taxi licensing is a non-executive function of the Council.
- 2.4 Section 53 of the Act specifies that the costs related to issue and administration of licences can be recovered in driver's licence fees. In respect of vehicle and operator licences, section 70 specifies that the reasonable cost of inspecting vehicles, the reasonable cost of providing hackney carriage stands and any reasonable administrative costs in connection with the foregoing and with the control and supervision of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles can be included in the fees.
- 2.5 Until recently, it was generally thought that the costs of enforcement could not be included in the calculation of fees for driver licences under Section 53 of the Act . However, the judgement in the Court of Appeal case of R (app Rehman) v Wakefield City Council [2020] R.T.R. 11 (2019) determined that "administration" can include the cost of enforcement or compliance against licensed drivers. The same principles also apply to the enforcement of vehicles and operators.
- 2.6 Licence fees cannot be used for enforcement activities against unlicensed activities, and it is therefore necessary for the cost of enforcement of unlicensed drivers, vehicles and operators to be met out of general funds, and costs awarded following Court proceedings. This work forms a very small part of the overall work of the taxi licensing service with the vast majority of activity directed at the licensed trade.
- 2.7 The general methodology behind the review of fees has been determined by the Act and the document 'Open for business: Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on locally set licence fees'. This guidance has been used as a starting point only because it does not take into account the specific statutory restrictions applicable to taxi and private hire fees and therefore not all the costs listed as recoverable in the guidance have been included in the fees. It was last revised in June 2017 and so also does not take into account the decision in the recent Wakefield case in relation to enforcement costs.

- 2.8 The LGA guidance acknowledges that the EU Services Directive, applicable to most forms of licensing, does not apply in the case of taxi and private hire licensing but the principles, remain helpful. The core principles are that fees should be non-discriminatory; justified; proportionate; clear; objective; made public in advance; transparent; and accessible.
- 2.9 The LGA guidance draws attention to two important judicial decisions in relation to fees. The first is R (Cummings) v Cardiff [2014] in which the Council conceded that the charges within a licensing regime for different categories of licence should be accounted entirely separately and should not subsidise each other. This means that driver licence fees cannot subsidise vehicle or operator licence fees and vice versa.
- 2.10 The second is R (Hemming) v Westminster City Council [2017]. Strictly speaking this does not apply to taxi and private hire licensing as this case proceeded under the auspices of the EU Services Directive from which transport services are specifically excluded. The principle ruling was that application fees relate solely to the costs of authorisation i.e. reviewing the application and granting or refusing it. Successful applicants should subsequently be charged an additional fee relating to the costs of on-going maintenance and enforcement. Whilst this is not necessarily applicable to taxi and private hire licensing it would be prudent to bear in mind the principle and might inform the Council's refund policy in respect to unsuccessful applications.
- 2.11 The LGA guidance acknowledges that Councils are free to design their licensing service in a manner that best serves the needs of their community and recover the costs accordingly. It provides a number of elements that Councils may wish to consider. These include administration, visits, third party costs, liaison with interested parties, management costs, local democracy costs, staffing on-costs, development, determination and production of licensing policies, web material, advice and guidance, setting and reviewing fees, monitoring and inspection visits and maintaining statutory registers.
- 2.12 A comprehensive review of the cost of delivering taxi licensing services has been carried out as part of the recent service budget review and new fees are proposed that reflect both the full staffing costs of running the service, as well as the support service costs, with likely pay award and inflationary uplifts. As required, this review has factored in recoverable costs incurred by the Council such as IT provision, administration, supplies and services etc. It does not include Freedom of Information requests, Data Protection Act requests or activity related to unlicensed drivers, operators or vehicles. A fee schedule of the proposed fees and charges is provided at Appendix A.
- 2.13 Where the fee pays for a service provided to the Council by a supplier, such as DVLA checks, safeguarding training or a physical item such as a plate or bracket for a vehicle, this has been factored into the fee. Supplier costs to the Council can vary

subject to wider market pressures and contract costs and are generally increased annually to reflect this. This means that these costs to the Council will be considered annually and, where required, fees and charges updated to directly reflect these increased costs. This will not require a formal approval process. Fees which are paid by the applicant directly to an external supplier for services required as part of the application or licensing process, such as medical examinations and testing for driving standards and English language, have not been included.

- 2.14 In arriving at the proposed fee levels, Officers considered the steps required for each licence type in order to process, validate, review, and grant or refuse a licence including external cross-check requirements such as Disclosure and Barring Service checks, checks with other authorities, knowledge tests and mechanical vehicle checks. A time estimate of activity required at each step was carried out based on an understanding of the existing processes and digital systems in place since the new Policy and harmonised service was implemented. This information was then considered in relation to application volumes received over the previous 15 months, as well as data held on licences due to renew over the next 3 years for each licence type. Future staffing costs and direct and indirect costs (as per the LGA guidance) were also considered in order to arrive at the proposed fees and charges. The methodology and approach used have had input and oversight from Finance Business Partner colleagues.
- 2.15 A benchmarking exercise was carried out of current fee levels charged by neighbouring local authority areas (12) and this is attached as Appendix B. A comparison of the proposed fees against the current average fee charged across the neighbouring local authorities is attached as Appendix C. Fees charged by Transport for London (TfL) have been excluded from the calculation of average fees charged because they are not comparable in terms of scale and operation, although TfL fees have been provided for information purposes. Benchmarking shows that the majority of these authorities have reviewed and increased their fees since benchmarking was last carried out in 2021. This is good practice but also likely to have been influenced by the introduction of the Statutory Standards in July 2020 and associated workload activity.

Driver fees

- 2.16 In comparison to the average driver fees charged by neighbouring local authorities, benchmarking indicates that while proposed driver fees will increase from current levels, they remain cheaper at first licence for both private hire, hackney carriage and dual licence applicants. The level of activity carried out within the Service for renewal applicants is comparative to that for new drivers and therefore the fee charged is consistent for both and proposed renewal fees are higher than the average fee across our neighbouring authorities but remain lower than some at an individual level. When the proposed fee is considered over the 3-year licence

duration period, the annual cost for a driver licence would be £120. It is common for local authorities to exclude some pre-requisite qualifications and checks e.g., English language tests, knowledge test from a driver fee but the approach to this is not consistent and therefore direct comparisons are not always reliable.

Vehicle fees

2.17 Vehicle licensing and enforcement activity is the largest sector of work undertaken by the service and the Council has a robust enforcement plan in place which includes enforcement at large events throughout the district, monitoring school contract runs at the start and end of the school day alongside the Client Transport Compliance team, joint operations with Thames Valley Police, plying for hire test purchase exercises, Equalities Act compliance monitoring and regular out of hours town centre and rank enforcement activity. The service also investigates and acts on complaints related to licensed vehicles (as summarised in the regular enforcement reports provided to the Committee). When vehicle fees were set in 2021 there were some uncertainties about how this element of the service would operate in practice under the new Policy. The new Policy introduced additional public safety requirements around vehicle licensing including DBS vetting of applicants, checking each application to ensure that the vehicle presented for licence is not a Category S vehicle (a vehicle that has previously suffered structural damage severe enough to have affected the structural integrity of the vehicle) as well as complexities relating to differing grandfather rights as a result of the previous 4 area policies in place and different requirements for age limits of vehicles.

2.18 In addition, vehicle testing arrangements have been reprocurd across the whole county area and a consistent and robust approach is taken with all vehicles that fail an MOT which aims to ensure a high standard of licensed vehicle for the travelling public. Vehicles that fail an MOT have their licences suspended in the majority of cases, until the vehicle is roadworthy and compliant with Policy requirements at which point the licence is reinstated. Officers run training workshops for approved testing centres and routinely visit testing centres to ensure adherence to standards. The licence fees set in 2021 were low and are not sufficient to adequately cover the cost of this activity and should increase across the board. In comparison to the average vehicle fees charged by neighbouring local authorities, the proposed fees are more expensive for new private hire and marginally more expensive for renewal private hire licences, but cheaper for both new and renewal hackney carriage licences.

Operator fees

2.19 Since the introduction of the new Policy the activity undertaken around operator licences has increased significantly. As a result of the new Policy, operator applications are subject to more scrutiny and vetting with a far higher degree of

consistency than was the case across the legacy areas. This includes more thorough DBS checks on applicants, including all company directors, greater scrutiny of staff working within the private hire company including DBS checks and employment policies to ensure suitability, review of lease arrangements for vehicles, and background checks with other local authorities and partners e.g. Police and fraud investigation teams. The service undertakes greater frequency of engagement and enforcement with operators to ensure that Policy requirements are understood and applied. This includes an initial inspection on first application followed by an annual review/visit. The service also investigates and act on intelligence and complaints related to licensed vehicles working for operators (as summarised in the regular enforcement reports provided to the Committee).

- 2.20 The licence fees set in 2021 were low and are not sufficient to adequately cover the cost of these activities and should increase across the board. In comparison to the average operator fees charged by neighbouring local authorities, the proposed fees are cheaper for operators with one vehicle and 10-50 vehicles but more expensive for operators with less than 10 vehicles or more than 50 vehicles (currently the Council does not licence any operators with more than 50 vehicles). Despite being more expensive than the average, operator fees remain lower than some of our neighbouring local authorities at a local level with Milton Keynes, Windsor & Maidenhead and Three Rivers charging consistently higher fees, and central Bedfordshire and Slough charging at a higher rate for some fee bands. When the proposed fee is considered over the 5-year licence duration period, the annual cost for a new operator with one vehicle would be £114. For a new operator with less than 10 vehicles the annual cost would be £223.60 and for a new operator with 10-50 vehicles the annual cost would be £370.80.
- 2.21 Whilst the Service is mindful of the impacts of an increase in fee to licensed drivers, the legislative framework on cost recovery and the increased activity associated with the implementation of the new Policy and Statutory Standards means that fees should increase. The legislation does not require the Council to make a precise calculation so as to arrive at an income which exactly meets the cost of the administration of the various licences. However, Councils are required to take a reasonable and proportionate approach and should aim to set a fee level that is sufficient to cover the cost but not make a surplus or deficit.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 At the meeting of the 1st February 2023, the Committee agreed to approve the proposed fees and charges for statutory advertisement and consultation. Since that meeting the fees and charges have been advertised in a newspaper within the Council area, as required by the legislation. All licence holders were contacted by email as well as via the regular Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Newsletter which is

sent to all licence holders. Licence holders were provided with a link to the fees and charges consultation survey and supporting information. The Council also engaged with representatives of the taxi and private hire trades, including the Licensed Private Hire Car Association (LPHCA), on the consultation via the Taxi Working Group as part of a scheduled meeting. The consultation was promoted to wider stakeholders, including the travelling public, via the Council's Facebook pages.

- 3.2 The consultation ended on the 15th March 2023 and responses were collated and analysed by the Business Intelligence team. During the consultation period 210 responses were received, 199 via the online survey and 10 via email. A written response was also received from the LPHCA and is provided at Appendix D. These have been incorporated into the consultation analysis provided at Appendix E.
- 3.3 The majority of respondents to the survey (67%) were members of the taxi and private hire trade or trade representatives. 33% of respondents were not members or representatives of the licensed trade. The majority of all respondents live and/or work in Buckinghamshire.
- 3.4 When asked whether they agreed with or objected to the proposed fees 88% of respondents objected. When considered by respondent type 96% of taxi and private hire licence holder respondents objected to the proposed fees with the cost-of-living crisis (54%) given within free text comments as the most common reason for objecting. 72% of non-licence holders objected to the proposed fees with consumer impact (13%) given within free text comments as the most common reason for objecting.
- 3.5 Unless the costs of the taxi and private hire licensing service are to be borne by the wider taxpayer, the costs of the taxi and private hire licensing service should be covered entirely by taxi licensing fee income into the Council. Respondents were asked whether they thought it was acceptable for the costs of the taxi and private hire licensing service to be paid for by the taxpayer if fee income did not cover the costs of providing the service. A small majority (53%) of respondents said it was not acceptable for the costs of the service to be borne by the taxpayer. When this is considered by respondent type 76% of non-licence holder respondents felt it was unacceptable. 58% of taxi and private hire licence holder and trade representative respondents felt that it was acceptable that the taxpayer should pay for the costs of the taxi and private hire licensing service.
- 3.6 Verbatim free text comments accompanying this question included the following views:

If taxi and private hire fees do not cover the cost of the taxi licensing service these costs would have to be paid for by the taxpayer. Do you think this is acceptable?

Verbatim comments from respondents by respondent type

Views from Taxi Drivers	Views from Operators, Licence Holders and Trade Representatives	Views from Other respondents
<p>'We taxi drivers are also tax -payers.'</p> <p>'The local economy benefits from people eating out and drinking, you need taxi drivers to transport them safely to and from their homes'</p> <p>'I think it is quite questionable on how the tax -payer money is currently being used...'</p> <p>'Why should the council not pay for such a service – we pay council tax..'</p> <p>'Taxes should be used for welfare and not private business'</p> <p>'I think the tax -payer should pay, everyone should contribute'</p> <p>'...you give grants to bus companies but not us...'</p> <p>'...I think the fees are already enough to cover the cost of the service...'</p>	<p>'Taxi licensing needs to be more responsive, there is no need to be overstaffed, as things have become more automated in the last year, the costs should have come down'</p> <p>'The council can find the funds from within' 'The council should manage their budget better.'</p> <p>'Taxi licensing should be run as a commercial business which should be self-funding'</p> <p>'I believe that the fees should easily be covered by what we pay, if they do not it is fine for them to be subsidised by the tax-payer....The new Carousel Pick Me Up service is subsidised so why should the traditional trade not be?...'</p> <p>'If you spread the cost between the tax -payers this will mean it will be divided and maybe you won't be affecting just a minority...'</p>	<p>'People who don't use taxis should not have to fund the licences'</p> <p>'This is not a public service as such and should be self-funding'</p> <p>'The operator and users of the service should pay for the service they operate/use'</p> <p>'...I have no cars and I have to rely on bus and taxi. However, the bus service is ridiculously unreliable, and it stops service too early in the evening. The only choice is taxi, but it is not cheap already. I can't afford anymore increment'</p> <p>'Taxis are an important public transport service. If it is acceptable for the council to support buses, there is no reason why modest expenditure on taxi services should be considered unacceptable'</p> <p>'This would take finances away from other services. If you want a license you pay for it.'</p> <p>'Make the fees work! We are all doing are bit making things work during hard times!</p>

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3.7 The LPHCA response stated that they considered it 'reasonable to get some of the licensing regimes funding from taxpayers as the industry alone should not be burdened with the whole issue of public safety' and that they considered that 'public safety will be compromised if more drivers are forced out through other increased costs like fees'.

3.8 The taxi and private hire licensing service aims to process all valid driver and vehicle licence applications within 10 days of a valid application received (with all supporting documents). Licence holder respondents were asked how important it is that applications are processed within 10 days. 90% of respondents to this question said that this was extremely or very important to them with only 2% of respondents stating that this was unimportant. This question was asked to gauge opinion of the value of the current service levels provided to the licensed trade. The taxi and private hire licensing service has recently formally consulted with staff on structural changes which have resulted in a reduction in headcount and savings of £146k. The majority of the costs of the service are staffing overheads and any further reduction in headcount (based on current demand levels) would impact on the ability of the service to process applications within these service timeframes. This would also impact the level of robust enforcement activity that could be carried out by the service which underpins the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy and protects and promotes public safety.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Overall, the results of the consultation were as expected and are not surprising given the current economic situation and inflationary climate. However, the authority is required by law to provide the taxi and private hire licensing service and unless the costs are subsidised by the taxpayer, it should be cost neutral and operate at no cost to the taxpayer.
- 4.2 Benchmarking indicates that the proposed fees compare reasonably with the average fees charged by neighbouring authorities and remain cheaper than some. When considering affordability in the case of driver and operator licences the licence duration periods (3 and 5 year respectively) are also relevant in terms of the cost per annum for the licence and associated activity carried out by the Council.
- 4.3 Given the uncertainties around the wider economy and declining trends in driver and vehicle numbers reported within the [Taxi and private hire statistics: England 2022](#) data it is proposed that the taxi and private hire licensing budget and fees and charges position is reported to Committee in Q4 of 2023/24, providing the opportunity to ensure that the position is as anticipated. In addition to this, the fees and charges will be reviewed annually in relation to any increase in RPI and where appropriate an increase will be applied to the fee to recover related increased costs to the Council. The Government are currently reviewing RPI and may replace it with another inflationary measure. If this is the case an annual increase in relation to any new measure prescribed, where appropriate, will be applied as a minimum to the fee to recover related increased costs to the Council. Any variation to vehicle or operator fees will require statutory advertisement.
- 4.4 A short form equalities impact assessment (Appendix F) was undertaken in January 2023 and accompanies this fees and charges review. Increases in fees and charges have the potential to impact groups with protected characteristics in terms of both race and ethnicity, and poverty (social and economic deprivation). This is because a high proportion of licensed drivers and operators are from ethnic minorities and any increase in fees may have a disproportionate effect on this group, including their ability to start working in the field or continue to do so. Those experiencing poverty (social and economic deprivation) may be impacted similarly. Under the public sector equality duty, the Committee should *have due regard* to this when making a decision on the proposed increases to fees and charges.
- 4.5 The equalities impact assessment recognises that any increase in fees is to accommodate the increased costs of licensing drivers, vehicles and operators and that the purpose of licensing is to ensure a regulatory regime to protect the public who use taxi and private vehicle hire services. Therefore, any possible financial impacts need to be balanced alongside the overriding Policy objective of protecting public safety. Case law judgements also indicate that Licensing Committees should

not take financial considerations into account when reaching individual taxi licence decisions and that the over-riding objective must be public safety. This is of relevance here and indicates that whilst the Council may be mindful of financial impacts on the taxi trade, this should not take precedence over public safety in decision making.

- 4.6 Where objections are received to the proposed advertised fees, under Section 70 of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 the Committee can either approve the fees as proposed, or modify the fees after consideration of the objections. Whether approved as proposed or modified, the fees must come into effect no later than two months after the date of advertisement (15th May 2023).

5. Next steps and review

- 5.1 If approved as proposed (without modification) the fees will take effect across the whole Council area on 24th April 2023. Fees must be brought into effect on or before 15th May 2023.
- 5.2 Fees will continue to be reviewed annually, and further reports will be provided to this committee following review.

6. Other options considered

None. Taxi fees should be cost neutral, and a reasonable fee must be charged to cover the cost of the service. Legally the Council cannot make a profit from taxi licensing.

7. Legal and financial implications

- 7.1 Sections 53 and 70 of the Act allow for the recovery of a reasonable fee for the grant of a driver, operator and vehicle licence. The fees must be set at a level which ensures that the Council does not make a profit and any deficit or surplus should be taken into consideration in subsequent fee reviews, to be recovered or refunded over a rolling three-year cycle.
- 7.2 This report covers the financial implications of the proposed fees and charges for taxi and private hire licensing. The proposed fees and charges are in line with keeping this as a cost neutral service which should be paid for from licence fee income and operate at no cost to the wider taxpayer. Fees and charges have been proposed to increase to cover the costs of providing the service.

8. Corporate implications

Protecting the vulnerable – The licensed trade provides an important service transporting members of the public, some of whom are. Taxi fees should be set at a

level which ensures that all necessary checks and testing can be carried out to ensure that new applicants are “fit and proper” to hold a licence, and for compliance checks and appropriate enforcement measures to be undertaken with existing licence holders where required.

Property – N/A

HR – N/A

Climate change – the legislative framework is such that it is difficult for Councils to incentivise the use of environmentally friendly vehicles through reduced fee levels as the costs associated with processing and administering a vehicle licence are the same. In effect a reduced fee would mean that other vehicle licence holders were subsidising the use of these vehicles. The Policy instead incentivises the use of less polluting vehicles through the provision of extended vehicle age limits.

Sustainability – N/A

Equality – A short form equalities impacts assessment has been carried out and accompanies this fees and charges review. Under the public sector equality duty when making a decision the Council must *have due regard* to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Data – N/A

Value for money – while the paramount consideration is passenger safety, the Licensing Service has ensured that the costs involved in delivering the service are kept to a minimum and that savings are made where possible.

9. Key documents:

DfT Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance 2010

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/212554/taxi-private-hire-licensing-guide.pdf

“Open for Business”, LGA Guidance on locally set fees:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/open-business-lga-guidance-locally-set-licence-fees>