

**Wiltshire Council**

**Licensing Committee**

**28 May 2012**

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### **Increase in Taxi fees**

#### **Executive Summary**

This report considers the responses to the proposed increase of Hackney Carriage and Private hire fees for the regulated zone of Wiltshire Council following the 28 day public consultation.

#### **Proposal**

That the Licensing Committee consider the objections and increase the fees to:

- £180 for vehicle licenses;
- £91 for newly licensed drivers; and
- £30 for each knowledge test carried out.

The increase in fees to take effect from 01 July 2012.

#### **Reason for Proposal**

This is a statutory requirement for the Council.

**Maggie Rae**

**Corporate Director of Public Health and Public Protection**

## Wiltshire Council

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### Increase in Taxi fares

#### Purpose of Report

To consider Hackney Carriage and Private Hire fee increase for the regulated area of Wiltshire Council following the public consultation.

#### Background

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 section 70 requires the Council to place a notice in a local newspaper stating the proposed fees to be charged for hackney carriage proprietors' licenses; private hire vehicle licenses; and private hire operator's license.

A notice was placed in the newspaper on the 5 April 2012.

Within the 28 day consultation period the Council received one letter of objection and a petition containing 44 signatures of licensed proprietors.

All the objections have come from proprietors licensed in the North zone of Wiltshire Council's regulated area.

The letter and petition are attached at Appendix A.

The objections have not been withdrawn therefore those objections must now be considered by the licensing committee.

The licensing of vehicles and drivers under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 is a self financing service and Wiltshire Council is legally unable to make a profit from the service.

The following figures give a breakdown of costs against income for the licensing service (period covering the 1 January 2011 to the 31 December 2011.)

Salaries	<b>171,658</b>
Vehicle Licences	3,153
MOT Inspections	150
Publications etc.	6,199
Statutory Notices	1,275
Equipment Purchases	1,018
Photocopier Rental	233
Miscellaneous Costs	295
Licence Income	(238,480)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(54,498)</b>

<b>Central Costs</b>	<b>Based on 10/11</b>
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Admin and Building	31,515
Finance	630
HR	1,810
ICT	16,023
Insurance	319
Policy & Comms	1,674
Procurement	185
SST	636

**Surplus (1,706)**

The Surplus shown does not take into account inspection fees owed to Fleet services that carry out the six monthly inspections of licensed vehicles, if these cost were taken into account the service budget would show a deficit in the region of £20,000.

The increase of £18 per vehicle license fee plus the introduction of a £30 knowledge test fee for newly licensed drivers would cover the deficit in the service budget thus rendering the service self financing.

Before the formation of Wiltshire Council the North zone proprietors paid £250 for their vehicle license fee, therefore if the committee were minded to increase the vehicle fee to £180 as recommended, the proprietors in the North would be paying £70 less than they were in 2008.

Since the formation of Wiltshire Council, efficiency savings through reduction in staffing costs has meant that the Council has one of the lowest cost vehicle licensing services in the country compared to other similar sized unitary councils. The fees charged by Wiltshire Council for this licensing service are lower than South Gloucestershire, Swindon Borough Council and BANES.

### **Environmental Impact**

There is minimal environmental impact of these proposals.

### **Equality and Diversity**

The impact of these proposals is assessed as 'low' against the Councils statutory responsibilities.

### **Risk Assessment**

If an increase in the fees is **not** implemented there will be a reduction in the service given to both the trade and placing public safety at risk.

### **Financial Implications**

If there is no increase in the fees charged by the council for this service the budget for the financial year 2012/2013 will be in deficit forecasted to be £25,000

## **Legal Implications**

The Council has advertised the proposed increase in fees chargeable for this service; the increase has been calculated on the basis of a cost neutral service to the Council and the income and expenditure of the service is open to inspection to both the trade and public.

The Council has considered all objections to the proposed increase in fees chargeable before a decision has been made as required by law.

## **Conclusion**

Following the public consultation and consideration of the objections, there is a demonstrable need for the increase in fees charged by the Council for this service. The increase has been kept to a level required to cover the council's costs in providing the service.

## **Recommendation**

That the Licensing Committee consider the objections and increase the fees to:

- £180 for vehicle licenses;
- £91 for newly licensed drivers; and
- £30 for each knowledge test carried out.

The increase in fees to take effect from 01 July 2012.

**Maggie Rae**

**Corporate Director of Public Health and Public Protection**

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Report Author: Kate Golledge, Public Protection Manager Safer Communities and Licensing

Contact Details: [kate.golledge@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:kate.golledge@wiltshire.gov.uk)

## **Background Papers**

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976  
Taxis - Licensing Law and Practice

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Letter of objection and petition against the increase in fees charged by Wiltshire Council