

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022**

**PLANNING, RIGHTS OF WAY AND TAXI LICENSING COMMITTEE**

**REPORT AUTHOR: Senior Licensing Officer – SUE JONES**

**REPORT TITLE: Taxi Licensing Fees 2022/23**

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**REPORT FOR:            Decision**

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**1.    Purpose**

1.1    To consider Taxi Licensing fees for the period April 2022-23

**2.    Background**

2.1    The setting of fees is governed by The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, it allows only for the recovery of costs in connection with administering, controlling, and supervising the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing regime.

2.2    Fees are calculated using a toolkit devised by the All-Wales Licensing Expert Panel with assistance from our finance team. The committee usually approves fees for consultation at this time of year ready for implementation the following April 1st.

2.3    Fees for the following year are usually based on the actual costs to the service for the previous financial year (a 2-year lag). In line with officer recommendation last year the committee agreed to leave fees unchanged for the current year 21/22. The rationale being that fees for the current period would reflect costs of the year prior to covid (19/20) when it was apparent that the costs for 20/21 were actually likely to be much less for a number of reasons:

- Application processes paired back due to covid
- No meetings or appointments with applicants -everything moved online
- Vehicles were not being checked in person by officers
- Lock downs meant no compliance checks were taking place
- Staff re-deployed to welfare calls when workload dropped during lockdown
- The licensing team as well as other public protection staff were allocated extra duties to enforce new covid regulations as businesses re-opened. A significant amount of officers' time was absorbed in covid education and enforcement visits, dealing

with complaints and enquires etc. (these covid costs have been funded by Welsh Government)

- No travel to meetings
- Reduction in attendance at training courses/ conferences etc

2.4 Fees for 2022/23 have been calculated on an average of the costs for years 19/20 (pre covid) and 20/21 (covid year). As anticipated, it means that fees have come out less for 2022/23. The current fees and proposed fees for 2022/23 are set out below:

	Current fee	Proposed fee for 2022/23	
Vehicles (1 year) Hackney Carriage Private Hire	£148	£130	
Driver Licence (3 year)	£260	£248	excludes DBS fee
Driver Licence (1 year – on request)	£150	£140	excludes DBS fee
Private Hire Operators (5 years)	£405	£387	excludes DBS fee

Estimated reduction in income for 2022/23 based on the above would be in the region of £9000, this can be absorbed by the funding already received for public protection services from Welsh Government for additional work carried out in relation to covid compliance.

- 2.5 When it comes to calculating fees for 2023/24, it will be based on our current costs (21/22). It is expected that there will be a recovery in the fee levels as activity has returned to near normal - officers have now resumed seeing vehicles and applicants, commencing of enforcement activity, attendance at training event has resumed and some of the covid enforcement work has now been passed to dedicated public protection officers. However, some of the benefits of the streamlined online process will be retained that will mean our processing costs will unlikely recover to the same levels. Efficiencies in processing time will free up officers to engage and assist the taxi trade especially in relation to implementation of the new Welsh Government taxi standards.
- 2.6 Should members approve the revised table of fees then The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Section 70 requires them to be advertised in the local press giving at least 28 days for objections.
- 2.7 Any objections to the proposed fees will need to be considered and reported back to this committee along with any revisions considered appropriate. If no objections are made, then these fees will come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

### **3. Advice**

- 3.1 Whilst it is unusual for fees to go down in any year, they must be transparent and based on our actual costs in administering the taxi regime and processing licences. These costs were significantly less last year due to the covid pandemic, it enabled officers to carry out other public protection duties in relation to covid enforcement. Members are advised that the fees calculated and presented above are approved for consultation.

### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The costs for advertising the fees and the officer work in relation to determination of costs and calculating the fees, production of this report and presenting to committee will be recovered in the next fee review (to determine 2023/24 fees).

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 The setting of fees is governed by The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. It only permits cost recovery for administering, controlling, and supervising the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing regime. Fees cannot be routinely uplifted; they must be transparent and can be subject to legal challenge. Compliant fees are based on actual costs.

### **6. Data Protection**

- 6.1 There are no implications for processing of personal data in the consideration or approval of this report.

### **7. Comment from local member(s)**

- 7.1 N/A fees are Powys wide.

### **8. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 N/A - Statutory requirement to charge a compliant fee.

### **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 That taxi fees for 2022/23 are approved to go out for consultation in the local press in line with statutory requirements and if not objected to will be in place for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. Any objections to the fees will come back to this committee for consideration.

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