

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>25 September 2023</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>PROPOSED TAXI LICENCE FEES 2023/24</b>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	<b>TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED FEES FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION</b>
<b>AUTHOR:</b>	<b>HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT</b>

## **1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 1.1 At a meeting of this Committee on 12 June 2023 you will recall that there was a recommendation to increase taxi licence fees to ensure that costs involved with the administration and compliance of these licences are recovered, in full. See the table in Appendix 1 to this report for full details of the proposed fees.
- 1.2 The Council is required to review its fees in respect of taxi licensing (i.e., hackney carriage licences, private hire vehicle licences, private hire operator and driver licences) on a regular basis. This Committee decided back in 2013 that taxi fees would be reviewed annually.
- 1.2 Sections 53 and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provide that fees may be charged at a level sufficient to cover reasonable costs -
- For granting a driver's licence for a hackney or private hire vehicle – costs associated with processing, administration and issuing licences.
  - For granting a vehicle and operator's licence – inspection costs, hackney carriage stand, public notices, management and supervision of vehicles and any other costs associated with processing an application.
- 1.3 The deficit in the income received for the different taxi licences varies; depending on the extra effort that takes place in processing applications and verifying compliance. The fee levels recommended to allow for the recovery of costs means an average increase of 12%.

## **2. CONSULTATION WITH THE INDUSTRY**

- 2.1 This Committee's decision in June to approve increasing the taxi licence fees was subject to a full public consultation, in accordance with the statutory requirements.
- 2.2 The industry has received a letter outlining the changes to the fees and the reasons for the increase; in order to allow enough time for the industry to highlight any concerns about the increase in fees (see appendix 2). In accordance with Section 70 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1976, a public notice of proposed changes to fees appeared in the local press on 20 July 2023. There is a specific timetable for public consultation; and no proposed changes will come into force until responses to the formal consultation have been considered by this Committee.
- 2.3 The notice placed in the press (see Appendix 3) includes the date when the fees become operative, no earlier than 28 days after the date of notice, provided there are no objections to the fees. New fees will not become effective until 1 October 2023; if there is a final decision to approve by this Committee.

- 2.4 The 28 days of consultation ended on the 18 August; and it can be confirmed that one email of objection has been received. One local taxi company has noted concern in an email (see appendix) that the increase in fees is going to make things difficult for companies to attract new drivers to apply for taxi driving licences due to the costs involved with the licensing process. It is noted that there is a shortage of taxis in Pwllheli and Pen Llŷn. The point is also being made that the taxi industry is continuing attempts to recover business following the significant drop in income during the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdowns. The respondent also believes that the costs of the Licensing Unit are likely to have fallen as many taxi companies now use the on-line self-service process to submit applications.
- 2.5 The Licensing Unit appreciates that it is not easy to encourage people to be running Taxi companies in the countryside; many new drivers are being attracted to work in the taxi industry in less rural locations such as Caernarfon and Bangor.
- 2.6 The service is not aware that there is evidence that fewer drivers are issuing licence applications when fees rise.
- 2.7 While the service accepts that the system to submit taxi licence applications through self-service has facilitated arrangements and assisted officers in processing applications sooner; a review of service costs shows that the self-service process has not resulted in cost reductions. A significant and increasing effort goes into checking the accuracy of the documents and carrying out the essential checks to ensure that individuals are fit and proper to hold a taxi licence and that vehicles are safe.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee finally approves the proposal to raise the fees with effect from the 1 October 2023 to the recommended level; in accordance with the procedure outlined following the public consultation.