



Northumberland County Council

Licensing & Regulatory Committee

Wednesday 12 February 2025

Review of fees and charges for the hackney carriage and private hire licensing scheme

Report of Councillor Councillor Gordon Stewart, Cabinet Member for Looking After our Communities

Responsible Officer Graeme Binning, Chief Fire Officer and Director of Public Protection

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

Licensing hackney carriage and private hire activity cuts across all of the priorities included in the Council's Corporate Plan.

- It supports **Achieving Value for Money** by ensuring that we provide a scheme that works efficiently and delivers the best customer experience.
- It supports **Tackling Inequalities** by ensuring that we provide the scheme is delivered taking into account the needs of our communities.
- It supports **Driving Economic Growth** by ensuring that we provide a scheme meets the needs to support the county to prosper.

2. Purpose of report

Northumberland County Council has a statutory responsibility to regulate hackney carriage ('taxi') and private hire activities by administering and enforcing a local licensing scheme.

Following review, this report outlines proposals to increase the fees it charges by 5% to keep pace with inflationary impacts and to maintain the principle of cost recovery.

3. Recommendations

Committee is recommended to accept the proposal to increase the fees the Authority charges for maintaining the hackney carriage and private hire licensing scheme and endorse commencement of the required public consultation exercise.

4. **Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

Not applicable.

5. **Background**

5.1 Introduction

Northumberland County Council has a statutory responsibility to regulate hackney carriage ('taxi') and private hire activities by administering and enforcing a local licensing scheme.

The legislation relevant to this licensing scheme permits local authorities to set fees for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, operators and drivers' licences. The principle is one of cost recovery and fees charged therefore must be reasonable.

5.2 Context

The Northumberland Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy states the fee structure it has adopted will be reviewed annually as part of the Authority's budget setting process.

Fees for drivers are not subject to statutory consultation

However, fees for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles and their operators are subject to statutory consultation. When a variation is proposed, it is a requirement that the local licensing authority:

- Publishes a notice setting what is proposed, and
- Allows at least 28 days to receive objections.

Furthermore:

- If no objections are made, these need to be appropriately considered, and
- If no objections are made (or are withdrawn), a date can be set for the proposal to come into effect.

Although statutory consultation is not required for drivers' licences, it is considered best practice to adopt a consistent approach by seeking feedback on all licence types using the formal process.

5.3 Proposed next steps

Following consultation with the section 151 officer it has been recommended, in order to keep pace with inflationary impacts and to maintain the principle of cost recovery, that fees are increased by 5%.

In accordance with the adopted officer delegation scheme, it is proposed the Director of Public Protection (the Chief Fire Officer) undertakes public consultation, in line with the approach outlined in section 5.2 above, to proceed with the recommendation.

Members will see this proposal presented to the Council meeting on 19 February, subject to approval by Cabinet, as part of the Authority’s budget setting process.

The table in the **Appendix** to this report outlines the effect of the proposal on each fee that it charges.

6. Options open to Committee and reasons for the recommendations

- 6.1 The recommendations at section 3 of this report invite Committee to accept the proposal.
- 6.2 Section 5.3 highlights the reasons Committee has been invited to do so.

7. Implications

Policy	The proposal meets with the requirements of the Northumberland Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy to review fees annually.
Finance and value for money	The proposal seeks to maintain the principle of cost recovery as outlined in the main body of the report.
Legal	Statutory consultation is required prior to introducing a variation of the fees charged by the Authority. This is outlined in the main body of the report.
Procurement	There are no procurement implications arising directly from this report.
Human resources	There are no human resources implications arising directly from this report.
Property	There are no property implications arising directly from this report.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	Not required. Assessing compliance with the public sector equality duty are considered specifically in relation to the administration and enforcement of the licensing activity.

Risk assessment	Risks associated with administering and enforcing the licensing activity are managed and monitored through the corporately adopted risk management framework and within the Public Protection Service.
Crime and disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report. A key objective of the licensing activity is to promote public safety and safeguard the travelling public.
Customer considerations	There are no customer consideration implications arising directly from this report. Licensees and future applicants will be able to transparently see the approach adopted by the Authority in relation to the fees it charges.
Carbon reduction	There are no carbon reduction implications arising directly from this report.
Health and wellbeing	There are no health and wellbeing implications arising directly from this report. The licensing activity promotes public safety.
Wards	All Wards

8. Background papers

Appendix: Schedule of licence fees charged with a 5% uplift.

[Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976, section 70](#)

[Northumberland Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, updated June 2024](#)

9. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable

10. Author and Contact Details

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