

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE

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meeting date: 30 JANUARY 2024  
title: OPERATORS LICENCE FEES  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: STEPHEN BARKER, SOLICITOR

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To determine whether there should be any variation in the fees charged for a private hire operator's licence.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives            }
  - Corporate Priorities               }
  - Other Considerations            }
- The Council aims to be a well managed Council, providing efficient services based on identified customer needs. The fees charged for licences form part of that service and should reflect the costs incurred whilst being set at a reasonable level for licence holders.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting on 31 October 2023, this Committee set fees for the licensing of operators of private hire vehicles, amongst other fees. Section 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended) ("the Act") provides that a district Council may charge such fees for the grant of an operator's licence as they may resolve from time to time and are sufficient to cover in whole or in part any reasonable administrative or other costs in respect of control and supervision of private hire vehicles. Fees should be set at a level which does not exceed the costs of administering the licensing process, and this cost is assessed as part of the fee setting process. In October 2023, Committee raised the relevant fees by 4%, which was the figure by which officers had been advised that costs had increased.

2.2 An operator's licence can be issued for one year, three years or five years, and the cost depends on the number of vehicles licensed. For five vehicles or fewer, the cost of a one year licence is £190.50; a three year licence is £504.50; and a five year licence

is £840.90. For each additional vehicle over five, the cost is £15.50 for a one year licence; £39.60 for a three year licence; and £65.30 for a five year licence.

2.3 Each local authority sets its own fees, taking into account its own particular circumstances, but adhering to the principles in 2.1 above.

2.4 The operator has certain responsibilities, and they must demonstrate compliance where appropriate and requested by the Council. In particular, they must:

- ensure there is valid planning permission and appropriate public liability insurance in respect of premises from which they operate.
- ensure that the standard conditions for operators, vehicles and drivers are available for inspection at the premises.
- allow entry for inspection of any documents.
- refuse entry to or remove any drunk or disorderly people from the premises and prohibit smoking on the premises.
- ensure drivers have appropriate qualifications, and, unless a booking has been validly sub-contracted, ensure that services are provided by Ribble Valley licensed drivers and vehicles.
- carry out appropriate checks on employees to satisfy themselves that the employee is a fit and proper person to undertake tasks and retain information to evidence this.
- keep records of all vehicles operated under their licence.
- at the time of booking and before commencement of each journey, log details of the journey and customer on record sheets, including details of any sub-contracting and shall retain these and make them available for inspection if so required.

2.5 Section 56 of the Act stipulates that for the purposes of the Act, every contract for hire of a private vehicle is deemed to be made with the operator who accepted the booking, whether or not he himself provided the vehicle.

### 3 ISSUES

3.1 At the annual taxi meeting, an operator requested that the Council look at operators' fees, as he considered they were too high for what he considered to be the operator's role as a booking agent.

- 3.2 Officers have reviewed the fees charged by other nearby authorities. As stated, the fees will reflect the particular circumstances of each authority and vary considerably in amounts, duration of licences, and the numbers of vehicles licensed for each staged fee increase.
- 3.3 By way of illustration, the fees for Blackburn with Darwen and North Yorkshire councils only apply to licences for one year or five years and vary with the size of the fleet operated. Fees in Blackburn with Darwen are set for one vehicle (annual - £220; 5 year £419); two to five vehicles (annual £309; 5 year £831), six to thirty vehicles (annual £608; 5 year £2,331), and 31 or more vehicles (annual £1,774; 5 year £7,193). North Yorkshire fees for up to two vehicles are £370 for one year (£490 for five years); three to 10 vehicles for one year are £530 (£690 for 5 years); eleven to fifty vehicles for one year are £690 (£850 for five years), and 51 and over vehicles for one year are £950 (£1,170 for five years).
- 3.4 Blackburn with Darwen is particularly relevant as the operator concerned has previously had involvement with that authority as a driver and operator.
- 3.5 As can be seen, different authorities have different approaches to establishing the costs involved. The fees charged by Ribble Valley Borough Council do not compare unfavourably with those of other authorities. However, given the specific request, Committee is requested to review the fees charged for operators' licences. It should be noted that the operator concerned did not put forward any evidence to suggest that the fees charged by the Council are not a reflection of the true cost; rather he sought to diminish the role and responsibilities of a private hire operator.

## 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – any reduction in fees will incur the cost of advertisement in a local newspaper. The Operators fees are set to ensure that the costs of administering those licences and ensuring compliance are fully recovered.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – committee must set fees at a level which does not exceed the cost of administering the process. This had been assessed at the time of setting the fees.
- Political – N/A
- Reputation – N/A
- Equality & Diversity – N/A

## 5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Review the fees set for the issue of operators' licences and determine that the fees asset on 31 October 2023 be maintained.

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