

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Licensing Committee
Date:	9 th March 2026
Subject:	Non-Executive (Licensing) Fees and Charges – 1 Year Operator Licences
Chief Officer:	Tessa Lindfield - Director of Public Health & Public Protection
Contact Officer:	Russell Denney-Clarke – Trading Standards and Licensing Manager
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix A – Outstanding non-executive fees and charges falling within the remit of the Licensing Committee. Appendix B – Comparison with other local licensing authorities

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report is to provide additional information to the Licensing Committee to complete the review of non-executive fees and charges for 2026/27.
- 1.2 The Licensing Committee is responsible for approving fees and charges for non-executive functions. These fees and charges have been set to ensure costs are covered or charged in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- 1.3 Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to:

Review the additional information and approve the remaining fees for non-executive functions for the year 2026/27.set out in **Appendix A**.

Reason: Fees and charges for non-executive functions falling within the remit of the Licensing Committee must be approved by the Licensing Committee and set for the coming 2026/27 financial year.

Commissioner Review

Locally set fees are a vital means of ensuring that full costs can be recovered by the council, businesses or individuals do not pay more than they should and reducing the risk of a subsidy from local taxpayers.

The income from fees and charges helps to manage demand and cover costs for providing services. Effective management of discretionary fees and charges will ensure that both the process and the fees themselves are transparent, fair, equitable and affordable. Price

sensitivities of individuals and businesses, supported by benchmarking where available, should be understood so that charges can be set appropriately to deliver the level of services necessary to achieve the council's agreed objectives.

Setting a subsidised rate is a financial policy decision and while the licensing committee handles the technical aspect of fee setting, if a committee's decision creates a financial shortfall this will have the impact of diverting funding from other services and as such will require a decision from the Cabinet or full Council. In arriving at their decision, the Council will need to consider whether the subsidy is affordable within the Council's budget and approve that subsidy from general funds.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 This report outlines fees and charges which must be approved by the Licensing Committee. Fees and charges are set in accordance with the [Slough Fees and Charges Framework](#).

Options considered

Option 1 To seek formal approval of the Fees and Charges outlined in this report.
This is recommended.

Option 2 To not approve the Fees and Charges outlined in this report.
This is not recommended. It would mean that the costs of providing the services against which the charges are made are increasing in line with inflation, and the fees and charges applied are not. This would have a negative budgetary impact and mean that full cost recovery is not achieved.

3. Background

3.1 The existing framework sets out the following key principles for the setting of fees and charges levied on service users, permissible within relevant legislation:

- a) Users pay for services at full cost recovery or charged in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- b) A strategic and informed approach to subsidy and concessions.
- c) Adopting a strategic approach to new charges.
- d) Appropriate communication and engagement with service users;
- e) Coherence with broader efficiency and framework objectives; and
- f) Fees and charges will be subject to systematic and in-depth review.

3.2 The approaches to setting fees and charges are described within the framework and summarised as follows:

- a) Full cost recovery, save where fees are charged in accordance with the relevant legislation. The council in most cases will adopt the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy definition of total cost to calculate the fee or charge.
- b) Full cost recovery with concessionary discounts.
- c) Subsidised cost.

- d) Nominal – in that the service is provided and funded through general taxation; and
- e) Prescribed charging in that fees and charges are set nationally in accordance with appropriate legislation.

3.3 Whilst fees and charges are set annually, there is provision within the council's constitution to enable in year decisions to be taken by officers, these are limited to inflation plus 3%.

3.4 The fees for non-executive functions should be set at the cost for providing the function, except where otherwise permitted or prescribed by legislation. In February 2026 the Committee raised concerns about the level of increase for some fees and decided not to approve the increases for two fees relating to private hire operators. This report addresses those two increases specifically. These charges and the legislative basis for charging are set out in **Appendix A** and benchmarking information is provided in **Appendix B** for information only.

Changes to proposed fees and charges

3.5 This report deals with fees for new Private Hire operators setting up in Slough.

- a. New Operator Licence (Grant) (any number of vehicles)
 - i. 1 year licence increase from £153 to £600
- b. Renewal Operator Licence (number of vehicles as applied at Grant)
 - i. 1 Vehicle, 1 year increase from £153 to £548.50. The number of vehicles is then charged at an additional cost and fees for these licence types were resolved at the Committee on 11th February 2026.

Rationale for the change in Fee

3.6 The changes in the recommended fees for 26/27 have been derived from a detailed review of the costs associated with different fees and charges. For private operators, the Committee approved other changes to fees, including reductions in fees charges to operators with higher numbers of vehicles. This followed a detailed assessment of the work required to approve and renew operators' licences as a whole and a review of the tasks required for individual applications. This led to a proposal to re-profile fees based on a more accurate assessment of officer time spent on activities.

New Operator Licence (Grant)

3.7 When a new company wants to set up as a Private Hire Operator in Slough a **new operator licence** is required by law. To successfully obtain a **new operator licence**, the process is the same irrespective of the number of vehicles applied for. The applicant submits an application form with payment and relevant documentation. This is reviewed by an officer and mandatory government checks undertaken. Any discrepancies are flagged and resolved between parties to make sure all statutory requirements are met.

3.8 A requirement of this licence type is for the operating base to be in the Borough and before granting a licence, the operating base, policies and procedures must be inspected. When all is in order the licence is granted.

- 3.9 The starting point for the fee setting is the approved officer hourly rate This was approved by cabinet on 16th February 2026 at £103 per hour for the 2026/27 municipal year. (Appendix 11 – Fees and Charges, Item 5, Section 10)
- 3.10 The approved officer rate includes costs such as salary, insurance, pension contributions, office space, heating, lighting, equipment and management oversight. This is therefore an on-costed rate and not just based on the officer's salary.
- 3.11 The average officer time spent for processing this licence type including mandatory checks, takes 3.5 hours per licence (3.5 x £103 = £360.50) and the operator base inspection takes 1 hour (1 x £103 = £103). The remaining £136.50 accounts for the entering on the database, printing, signing, posting and enforcement of granted licences.
- 3.12 By law local authorities need to set two separate fees for certain types of licence. One fee covers the administration of the licence application (Part A) and the other fee the cost of managing the scheme and enforcing compliance (Part B). This ensures that unsuccessful applicants do not have to contribute towards the costs of management, monitoring and enforcement of the scheme. The Part B fee of this licence type has been reviewed by officers, and it is deemed that this should be £136.50, as opposed to the £96 originally proposed. This does not affect the overall fee but does reduce the fee that is payable by an unsuccessful applicant as a higher amount will be refunded if the licence is not granted.
- 3.13 By keeping the fee at £153, the council would be subsidising this licence type by **£447.00** which is around a 75% shortfall of the cost of administering this licence type. We average around 5 of this licence type in any year, since 2020 there has been 32, 9 of which during 2025/2026.

Renewal Operator Licence - One Year, One Vehicle

- 3.14 The same rationale applies to a renewal operator licence which would be required should an operator wish to continue operating in Slough for one year with one vehicle. The £51.50 difference between this fee and the new operator licence is because an operating base inspection is not always required. If it is necessary, it is quicker to undertake than an inspection on a new premises. The processing of the licence also takes less time as the applicant's records are already on the system. It is of note that most operators have more than one vehicle and therefore apply for a multi vehicle licence or the licence holder renews with a 5 year licence.

Benchmarking

- 3.15 A comparison was made between the fees that Slough charges with other Licensing Authorities nearby. Not all authorities offer these types of licence for a single year, for example TfL only offer 5 years, and a new 10 vehicle licence is £2000. In comparison with authorities that do offer single year licences, our fees for 2025/26 were markedly lower, but will be higher if this proposal is accepted. One year licences are not common in Slough with only 9 of this licence type due for renewal in 2026/2027. **APPENDIX B** provides more details.

4. Implications of the Recommendation

4.1 Financial implications

- 4.1.1 Financial implications have been set out in this report including the expectation that fees and charges must be set in accordance with the Council's existing framework and where applicable on a full cost recovery basis so that it does not impact on the council taxpayer. Failure to review the fees may result in an increase in the difference between income recovered and the costs incurred by the Authority.
- 4.1.2 The overall Public Protection fees and charges budget for 2025/26 is £0.522m. There are multiple variables impacting on the potential income for 2026/27, most notably the sensitivity of demand following the revision of the fee and charges unit rates. Within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/29 the Public Protection fees and charges budget 2026/27 was increased by £0.011m.

4.2 Legal implications

- 4.2.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 permits the council to charge a reasonable fee to cover in whole or in part the costs of administering and enforcing the licencing scheme for private hire operators. It is permitted to charge different fees to different operators to reflect the difference in cost, including based on number of vehicles and whether the licence is a new one or a renewal. In addition, the fee is split into two to reflect the costs of assessing the application (this fee is non-refundable) and the costs of monitoring and enforcement (this fee is refundable if the applicant is unsuccessful).
- 4.2.2 Under Part 3.4 of the Council's Constitution (Responsibility for Council Functions), the Licensing Committee has responsibility to approve fees and charges for the following functions where they are not executive functions or reserved to Council: private hire and hackney carriages, the Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005, food safety and control, animal health, welfare, safety and control and other licensing and registration functions including caravan sites, markets, street trading, scrap yards, sports grounds, special treatments and sex establishments.

4.3 Risk management implications

- 4.3.1 There is a risk that increasing fees and charges in line with cost recovery may have a negative impact on service uptake. However the numbers impacted are relatively small and there is no indication that this will have an impact on demand. This will be monitored and reported on through the normal budget monitoring process. This risk must be balanced against the risks of an increasing budget gap as costs increase without a corresponding increase in fees.

4.4 Environmental implications

- 4.4.1 None

4.5 *Equality implications*

4.5.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The service does not collect equality monitoring data on applicants for operating licences. Having in place a robust system for checking that an operator is fit and proper and has in place suitable facilities ensures the Council fulfils its statutory obligations. This will support residents and visitors who are more likely to be reliant on private hire vehicles.

5. Background Papers

None

Appendix A – List of current (2025/26) and proposed (2026/27) fees and charges							
Fee Description 1	Fee Description 2	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	% Increase	Basis For Charging	Legislation Giving Power To Charge	Committee Decision?
Private Hire Operators (PHO)	New 1 year	£153.00	£600.00	292.16%	Statutory Discretionary	s70, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976	£136.50 of fee is for enforcement / Yes
	Renewal 1 vehicle only, 1 year	£153.00	£548.50	258.50%	Statutory Discretionary	s70, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976	£136.50 of fee is for enforcement / Yes

Appendix B – Comparison with other Licensing Authorities 2025/26							
Type	Slough		TfL	Spelthorne	RBWM	Bracknell	Buckinghamshire
	2025/26	2026/27	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26
Operator (1 Vehicle, 1 year New)	£153.00	£600.00	Not Offered	£367.00	£318.00	Not Offered	£474.00
Operator (1 Vehicle, 1 year Renewal)	£153.00	£548.50	Not Offered	Not Offered	£318.00	Not Offered	£474.00

To note: Manchester City Council £2790, Portsmouth City Council £836, Oxford City Council £577 – 1 year, 1 vehicle. Renewals at these council's are also maintained at the same rate.