

Background Paper B – Consultation Responses

Respondent #1

I think it's not at the right time with this new government and it's proposed vehicle tax increases next year, then that's going to put a strain on finances, It should be left alone for now and looked at again in the future as we will not benefit from it it will just add extra financial burden and no improvement of the carriage office, ie having a part time opening , 1 or 2 test days a week and no physical presence of carriage officers looking around on the ranks and not to mention having to do all the paperwork ourselves online.

Officer Response

Thank you for your comments regarding our proposed licence fees.

Your comments will be included within the report to the Licensing & Environmental Health Committee for its consideration.

I note your concerns and are happy to discuss this further if desired. I can confirm the Licensing Team does not operate on part time opening and are contactable during standard council opening hours The service has an enforcement team which includes a dedicated full time field officer for carrying out proactive checks of ranks and other areas of taxi licensing. Service users are being encouraged towards online submissions in order to provide efficiencies within the service and ultimately assist in keeping the licensing fees as low as possible. The licensing service operates on a cost recovery basis only. Unfortunately, I am unclear on the meaning behind your reference to test days but would be happy to discuss further if you are able to clarify.

Respondent #2

I'm struggling to find work so this proposal isnt right and doesn't make sense.

Officer Response

Thank you for your comments regarding our proposed licence fees, and I am sorry to hear of your situation.

Your comments will be included within the report to the Licensing & Environmental Health Committee for its consideration, however, the Council is required to operate a cost-recovery Licensing Service, and this may result in unavoidable variations to the fees levied.

Respondent #3

I am writing to formally express my concern regarding the proposed price increase on HCV Driver licensing, which, as I understand, is significantly above the current inflation rate of 1.7% and the projected rate of 2.5%. While I acknowledge the rising costs that many businesses are facing (including that of our own), I feel compelled to address the substantial increase that is proposed >4%, which is 1.5% higher than the that projected this exceeds what would be considered a reasonable adjustment based on inflation.

If implemented this will be causing financial strain and, frankly, puts a considerable burden on customers who will be faced with having to pay more for taxi services (request for tariff increase currently pending with Uttlesford Licensing).

I understand that businesses must adapt to changing economic conditions, but I respectfully request that you reconsider or at least review the scale of this price adjustment as such a sharp price increase will lead to difficulty and further pressure for the Uttlesford HCV community continuing to support the Uttlesford and visiting population with a quality service, especially when cheaper alternatives (Uber) are available in the market.

Could you kindly provide further insight into the reasoning behind this increase? It is challenging to understand how you can propose reduce the cost of Private Hire licensing whilst increasing that of HCV licensing, which will be well above inflation? If the decision is based on unavoidable costs necessary to maintain quality or service, I would appreciate more transparency and communication about those factors. In addition, I would ask that you consider offering more gradual price adjustments in the future to help ease the impact on your customer base.

I trust that you will take my concerns into consideration and look forward to hearing from you regarding any potential adjustments or reassessments.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I hope we can come to a mutually beneficial resolution.

Officer Response

Thank you for your comments regarding our proposed licence fees.

It is true that the inflation rate excluding housing costs was 1.7% for the year ending Sept 24 but there were some one-off effects pushing that rate down. The latest figures for Nov 24 show CPI excluding housing costs is 2.6% and including Housing costs it is 3.5%. It is clear that the 2% additional national insurance costs and minimum wage increase of 6.7% from April next year will push inflation excluding housing costs higher still.

Labour have recommended public sector pay awards of 2.8% but we believe, based on other recent public sector award and the likely inflation level in 2025, that the LG pay award will be around 3%. The fees for 2025/26 are based on an assumption of a 3% pay award + a 1% increase due to licensing staff moving up their pay scale (staff start at the bottom of a set pay grade and move up the grade over a period of 4 to 6 years). Some staff are at the bottom of their grade, some are at the middle and some are at the top so the 1% increase is an average.

Your comments are noted with regards to future gradual price adjustments and this response will be included within the report to the Licensing & Environmental Health Committee for its consideration.