

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

3 December 2015

Report by Chief Officer – Legal & Procurement

CHARGING FOR SERVICES 2016/17

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to submit for approval the proposed licensing fees and charges for 2016/17.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:-

- (a) Alters charges for 2016/17 in accordance with the table in Appendix 1 (under exception of the free charges for wheelchair accessible vehicles which will only be introduced in the circumstances explained in (d) below). The increases are approximately 1.8% in line with inflation over the intervening period since the last increase;
- (b) Introduce split rate licensing for Street Traders and Window Cleaners businesses and Street Trader and Window Cleaner employees in line with the rates shown on Appendix 1;
- (c) Introduces a new same day service surcharge and alters the charge for a taxi knowledge test to take account of the new practical element; and
- (d) Delegates power to the Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement) to decide on behalf of Cabinet to introduce the free charges in Appendix 1 only if the Licensing Committee decides to recommend to Cabinet a continuation of the free licence fees for a further period in terms of the minutes of that committee dated 3 March 2015.

BACKGROUND

3. The licensing section of legal services currently administers approximately 1,250 licences across various Civic Government and miscellaneous licensing categories. In terms of Civic Government legislation, the licensing service must recover all the costs of providing the service through the fees charged. This requirement ensures that council tax payers, through mainstream revenue budgets are not being asked to subsidise the service. However, total licensing income is not permitted to exceed the total cost of the service.

REPORT

4.

- (a) Legal Services has not received any adverse comments regarding charging levels. Options of temporary, 1, 2 and 3 year licences were recently

introduced in order to reduce the burden of payment for applicants and the use of the one year licence has become popular, probably due to the reduced outlay for applicants.

- (b) Licensing is a regulatory function of the Council imposed on it by various statutory provisions and as such, the Council is unable to choose whether or not to provide this service.
- (c) The purpose of licensing is to protect the public by regulating certain activities and making sure that those activities are carried out by appropriate persons in accordance with the terms of their licence.
- (d) The licensing section has recovered its costs in full for the period 2014/15.
- (e) Overall, the service aims to balance all costs of licensing to maximise the utilisation of the staff, minimise costs and maximise service availability.

The Council's Equality Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes 2013-2017 contain a specific Intermediate Outcome which aims to make wheelchair users confident of being able to hire a wheelchair accessible taxi at a fair cost when they need one. The Licensing Committee agreed at its meeting of 3rd march 2015 to introduce zero rates for any person wishing to licence a new wheelchair accessible vehicle as a taxi or private hire car or to substitute a wheelchair accessible vehicle for an existing vehicle. This arrangement is due to be reviewed by the licensing committee after a period of one year when consideration will be given to recommending to Cabinet that the licence fee for taxi and private hire wheelchair accessible vehicles be waived for a further period. The charges at appendix 1 include reference to the free charges which will only be operational if (a) the licensing committee decides to continue them and (b) the cabinet agrees to this. To avoid the necessity for a further report on this one item, it is requested that delegated power is granted to implement the decision of the Licensing Committee.

- (f) A benchmarking exercise with neighbouring authorities in Glasgow and Renfrewshire has revealed that the charge by East Renfrewshire Council for Street Traders and Window Cleaners licences are substantially more expensive in our authority. These differences appear to be historical and may not have been reviewed or benchmarked previously. There does not appear to be any operational reason for the difference in prices and the increase costs could be a potential barrier for new businesses setting up in East Renfrewshire and therefore a barrier to job creation and economic development within East Renfrewshire. It should be noted that a licence is required for each employee working as a Street Trader or Window Cleaner as well as the business owner. The Cabinet is asked to consider a new proposal for split rate licensing fees, one for the business of the Street Trading or Window Cleaning and a reduced rate for additional employees licensing.
- (g) Licensed Taxi Drivers in East Renfrewshire for many years had to sit and pass a "knowledge test" of the streets and landmarks of East Renfrewshire. This was previously a written multiple choice test but is now a combined knowledge/practical test carried out by the Council's Civic Government Enforcement officer. To account for the increased costs of providing a practical test, it is proposed that the rate is increased by more than inflation from £31 to £45.

- h. When a taxi or private hire operator wishes to change his vehicle, the target for issuing new paperwork and plates is 24 hours from the time of receipt of the application and any additional information required. Whereas the aim is to issue documents same day, it is not always possible due to the multiple tasks covered by Business Support. This is not always an acceptable situation to customers if, for example, they are not able to work until new licence plates arrive. To prioritise cases and to assist customers who urgently require new plates, it is suggested that the Council introduce a same day service (where applicable) similar to that provided in passport offices. Like passport offices it is suggested that a surcharge for a same day service is levied.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

5. It is anticipated that the changes applied at present will allow the Council to continue to recover the costs of licensing in full from licensing fees and charges. Legal Services will continue to update and seek efficiencies in licensing where appropriate.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

6. There are no implications in terms of staffing, property, legal, IT, equalities and sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. It is recommended that the Cabinet:-
 - (a) Alters charges for 2016/17 in accordance with the table in Appendix 1 (under exception of the free charges for wheelchair accessible vehicles which will only be introduced in the circumstances explained in (d) below). The increases are approximately 1.8% in line with inflation over the intervening period since the last increase;
 - (b) Introduce split rate licensing for Street Traders and Window Cleaners businesses and Street Trader and Window Cleaner employees in line with the rates shown on Appendix 1;
 - (c) Introduces a new same day service surcharge and alters the charge for a taxi knowledge test to take account of the new practical element; and
 - (e) Delegates power to the Chief Officer (Legal and Procurement) to decide on behalf of Cabinet to introduce the free charges in Appendix 1 only if the Licensing Committee decides to recommend to Cabinet a continuation of the free licence fees for a further period in terms of the minutes of that committee dated 3 March 2015.

REPORT AUTHOR

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APPENDIX 1

Charging Classification and Policy for 2015/16

	Service	Current Charge 2015/16	Proposed Charge 2016/17	Proposal
	Licensing			
1.	Taxi Operator's Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£147 £295 £354	£150 £300 £360	change
2.	Taxi Operator's Licence (WAV) 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£0.00 £0.00 £0.00	£0.00 £0.00 £0.00	New Charge
3.	Taxi Driver's Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£ 85 £170 £204	£ 87 £173 £208	change
4.	Private Hire Operator's Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£132 £265 £316	£134 £269 £321	change
5.	Private Hire Operator's Licence (WAV) 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£0.00 £0.00 £0.00	£0.00 £0.00 £0.00	New Charge
6.	Private Hire Driver's Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£ 81 £161 £193	£ 82 £164 £196	change
7.	Street Trader's Licence (business/owner) 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£157 £249 £380	£160 £254 £387	change
8.	Street Trader (employee)		£ 82 £164 £196	
9.	Window Cleaner's Licence (business/owner) 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£171 £344 £412	£174 £350 £419	change
10.	Window Cleaner (employee)		£ 82 £164 £196	

	Service	Current Charge 2015/16	Proposed Charge 2016/17	Proposal
11.	Public Entertainment Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£244 £492 £590	£248 £501 £601	change
12.	Public Entertainment Sunbed Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£244 £492 £590	£248 £501 £601	change
13.	Market Operator's Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£244 £492 £590	£248 £501 £601	change
14.	Late Hours Catering Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£171 £344 £412	£174 £350 £419	change
15.	Second Hand Dealer's Licence 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£157 £229 £380	£160 £233 £387	change
16.	Indoor Sports Entertainment Licence 1 y /(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£177 £358 £428	£200 £364 £436	change
17.	Skin Piercing 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£244 £492 £590	£248 £501 £601	change
18.	Theatre Licence (1 year)	£134	£136	change
19.	Vehicle Inspection Fee (Admin) (Annual)	£ 24	£ 25	change
20.	Vehicle Partial Retest Fee (Admin)	£ 10	£ 11.80	change
21.	ID Badge Replacement	£ 10	£ 11.80	change
22.	Vehicle Substitution Fee	£ 51	£ 52	change
23.	Licence Variation Fee	£ 51	£ 52	change
24.	Front Vehicle Licence Plate Inserts	£ 7.35	£ 7.50	change
25.	Rear Vehicle Licence Plate Inserts	£ 8.40	£ 8.60	change
26.	Number Plate Bracket Kit	£ 8.40	£ 8.60	change
27.	Number Plate Bracket Rigid Bridge Kit	£ 3.70	£ 3.80	change
28.	Number Plate Platform Kit Flat	£ 5.25	£ 5.30	change
29.	Platform Flexiplate Kit Size 2	£ 7.35	£ 7.50	change
30.	Platform Flexiplate Kit Size 4	£ 8.40	£ 8.50	change
31.	Strapping Accessory Kit	£ 5.25	£ 5.30	change
32.	Quick Release Button & Key Set	£ 1.20	£ 1.20	No change
33.	No Smoking Sticker	£ 2.10	£ 2.10	No change
34.	Tariff Sheet	£ 3.15	£ 3.20	change

35.	Taxi Driver Test	£ 31	£ 45	change
36.	Taxi/Private Hire Booking Offices 1 yr /(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£244 £492 £590	£248 £501 £601	change
37.	Knife Dealer's Licence 1 yr /(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£ 98 £196 £236	£100 £200 £240	change
38.	Metal Dealer 1 yr/(Temp) 2 yrs 3 yrs	£160 £321 £385	£163 £327 £342	change
39.	Notification of changes and alterations Civic Government Licences	£ 15	£ 18	change
40.	Same day service surcharge (where applicable)		£ 40	New Charge
41.	Monthly or part monthly licences in respect of private hire and taxis to be charged at 1/12 th of the yearly rate.			

* Charging Recovery Policy is to recover full cost.

* Classification is Statutory Charge

* Charges are rounded to the nearest pound if over £10 or the nearest 10p if under £10