

Subject: Licensing Unit Appointments System – Introduction of a Re-Booking Fee

Status: For Publication

Report to: Licensing Committee

Date: 6th August 2007

Report of: Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services

Portfolio

Holder: Portfolio Holder for a Well-Managed Council

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of a proposal to introduce a re-booking fee.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
- Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 The Licensing Unit is responsible for the Licensing of:

- **Taxi Trade:** Licences include Hackney Carriage, Hackney Carriage Driver, Private Hire Operator, Private Hire Driver, and Private Hire Vehicle.
- **Licensing Act 2003:** Licences include Premises Licences, Personal Alcohol Licence, Club Premises Certificate, and Temporary Event Notices.
- **Gambling Act 2005:** Licences include Premises Licenses

- **General Licensing:** Licences include Amusements with Prizes, Gaming Machines – Section 34(1), Gaming Machines – Section 34(5E), House to House Collections, Second Hand Dealers, Small Lotteries, Street Collections, Street Trader Licences (upcoming)
 - The above lists are not exhaustive.
- 4.2 In order to operate efficiently and effectively and to enable the delivery of best value for services, the Licensing Unit operates a strict appointments system from 9.00am to 1.00pm
- 4.3 In recent weeks, the Licensing Unit has received verbal complaints from the Taxi Trade that there has not been a timely appointment available. The Taxi Trade have suggested that the Licensing Unit operate an appointments system up to 5.00pm.
- 4.4 The Licensing Unit is unable to operate this service due to staffing capacity. If a decision was made to do this, licence fees would have to be revised to enable the Licensing Unit to recruit another staff member.
- 4.5 Vehicle and Driver renewals can be processed within the 4-weeks up to the licence expiry. The trade do not lose any time on their licence and the Licensing Unit encourages the Taxi Trade to take advantage of this service. Postal applications for driver licences are also available, and again, encouraged.
- 4.6 On a weekly basis, particularly on a Friday, the Licensing Unit are contacted for 'urgent' appointments from the Taxi Trade. The emergency appears to be that their licence expires that day and an appointment is required to renew.
- 4.7 Over a 12-week period to June 2007 there was a number of instances in support of this application and these are as follows:
- There have been 12-appointments where nobody has turned up and no explanatory contact has been made
 - One vehicle has been presented for renewal with vomit all over the rear seat
 - One vehicle has been presented for renewal with a severely torn front passenger seat – the stuffing was spilling out
 - One vehicle has been presented for renewal without Excise Duty
 - Five vehicles have been presented for renewal without a correctly calibrated Taximeter
 - Four vehicles have been presented for renewal without the correct insurance document
 - One vehicle has been presented without a current MOT certificate
- 4.8 In all the above instances a further appointment was required.
- 4.9 In all the above instances the original appointment could have been offered elsewhere.
- 4.10 In all the above instances the client was fully aware of the conditions before presenting the vehicle, excuses were provided and the Licensing Unit were asked that these details were ignored for now to be corrected in the next few days.
- 4.11 It is proposed, therefore, that a re-booking fee be introduced.

5. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

5.1 The financial implications are noted in the report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

6.1 There are no specific legal implications.

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

7.1 There are no specific human resources implications

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The proposed re-booking fee is intended to act as a deterrent to the Taxi Trade when either failing to cancel appointments, arriving at the Licensing Unit without the required documentation, presenting unfit vehicles for renewal etc.

8.2 The Council can charge such fees as they consider being reasonable with a view to recovering the costs of the issue and administration of licences.

8.3 It is anticipated that should the proposed re-booking fee be introduced there would be a reduction in the instances listed above therefore freeing up the appointments system

8.4 That a reserve list be kept in order to fill appointments cancelled.

8.5 That this report is taken to Cabinet with a recommendation for approval.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve a re-booking fee be payable to the Licensing Unit for:

- Failure to attend appointments without reasonable explanation
- Failure to provide the required relevant documents without reasonable explanation
- Presentation of unfit vehicles for Licensing
- Any other reasonable cause determined by the Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services.

9.2 It is proposed that the re-booking fee is £35.00.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- Legal & Democratic Services
- Licensing Unit
- Trade Associations

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required: No

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached: No

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Consultation extract from the minutes of the Taxi Trade meeting held on 5th June 2007, 10.00am at Hardmans Mill	Appendix 1