

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration.****Council: 22 March 2021**

Subject: Taxi Licensing Fees**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an analysis of the position within West Dunbartonshire Council in respect to both Taxi/Private Hire Car Driver's Licences and Taxi/Private Hire Car Operator's Licences with regard to the level of fees charged and how this compares to other Local Authorities. The report also advises of the anticipated income from these fees if a 4% increase is applied from 1 April 2021. In addition, the report provides details of other financial assistance available to date for taxi drivers and details of Central Government support available for self-employed persons.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the terms of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1** At a meeting of Council on 24 February 2021, a motion was agreed to request a report from Officers to report to Council on the cost of the Taxi Badge ("Taxi/Private Hire Car Driver's Licence"), the cost of the Taxi Plate ("Taxi/Private Hire Car Operator's Licence"), the scale of fees levied in West Dunbartonshire, and how that compares to benchmarked or comparator Local Authorities, and the details of the anticipated income from a 4% increase on this year's fees. In addition, to provide a summary of other grant monies available to date for taxi driver's in comparison with other self-employed persons.
- 3.2** The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 requires Councils to set fees so that the total amount of income derived from fees is sufficient to meet the expenses of the authority in exercising their licensing functions. This is on the basis of full cost recovery for taxi fees in terms of Part 2, Section 12 of the Act.
- 3.3** A full fee review was conducted and reported to the Licensing Committee on 22 January 2014, which led to fees charged for licences covered by the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and licences covered by other legislation such as Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 and Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 being revised so that they more accurately met the cost of regulating the activities administered within the licensing function. Fees relating to both Taxi/Private Hire Car Driver's Licences and Taxi/Private Hire Car Licences

were not increased at that time as the outcome of the review showed that taxi related fees broke even with the expenses incurred. In terms of the fee review exercise the reports to the Licensing Committee refer to the processes undertaken and factors considered by Officers in the fee review. Officers conducted a mid-term fee review in 2017 that did not indicate any surplus with regard to fee income surpassing the costs of the licensing function for all licence types. In terms of determining the fee reviews, a variety of costs were considered for full cost recovery including staffing costs, legal costs and the proportion of central support allocation costs for licensing services. The costs and exercises undertaken by officers are more fully referred to in the reports to the Licensing Committee on [22 January 2014](#) and the most recent full review concluded in March 2020; the terms of which were issued to Members of the Licensing Committee. Again, this most recent fee review showed no surplus projected in any licence categories.

3.4 Currently there are 446 licensed Taxi/Private Hire Car Drivers in West Dunbartonshire with 216 licensed to operate in the Clydebank zone and 230 in the Dumbarton & Vale of Leven zone.

3.5 West Dunbartonshire Council's current taxi fees are as follows:

Licence Type	Charge	Licence Duration
Taxi/Private Hire Car Driver's	£284.50	1 year
Taxi Private Hire Car Driver's	£638.50	3 years

The Taxi/Private Hire Car Operator's licence has a duration of 3 years. These fees are typically subject to a 4% increase each year following decisions taken annually by Council in relation to the update of the Long Term Finance Strategy.

4. Main Issues

4.1 It is not known at the time of writing this report as to whether all Taxi/Private Hire Car Drivers or Taxi/Private Hire Car Operators will renew their licences in the next financial year. On the basis that all submit applications for renewal then anticipated fee income would be as follows with the 4% uplift worth £9,064:

Licence Type	Annual Fees (2020/21 prices)	Annual Fees (2021/22 prices)	Increase
Private Hire	£16,578	£17,241	£663
Taxi Drivers	£143,724	£149,473	£5,749
Taxi Licences	£66,312	£68,964	£2,652
Total	£226,614	£235,678	£9,064

4.2 In terms of comparators with other Local Authorities at Appendix 1 there is a group of Councils that are benchmarked for planning and other matters.

There is no specific group of licensing authorities identified for licensing benchmarking. Accordingly, Officers decided to benchmark in terms of the Local Government benchmarking 'family group' that West Dunbartonshire Council are within for planning and other such matters.

- 4.3 Eligible holders of a Taxi/Private Hire Car Driver's Licence who meet the Scottish Government criteria have been able to apply for a Taxi Fund Grant of £1,500. All licence holders who are self-employed have also been able to apply for additional financial support using the UK Government's various self-employment schemes. It is difficult to quantify the full range of supports available for self employed persons as this will depend on individual circumstances of the applicant.

5. People Implications

- 5.1 There are no people implications.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial or procurement implications from the terms of this report.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1 As the report is for noting there are no risks associated with considering this report. Civic fees are not limited to taxi related licensing functions but cover a range of licensable activities such as Street Trader's, Window Cleaner's, Second Hand Dealer's, Public Entertainment etc. Many of those licensees will also have also suffered adverse trading conditions since the onset of the pandemic. Any decision to depart from the fees agreed for certain categories of licensee is likely to prompt other licence holders to ask to be treated the same and will have a financial implication which would be required to be considered depending on what that decision was.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 The Chief Officer - Finance has been consulted in connection with the terms of this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 This report supports the Council's strategic aim of a strong local economy.

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Designation: Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration.

Date: 8th March 2021.

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Appendices:	Scale of Fees for Benchmarked Local Authorities-Taxi Licensing Fees.
Background Papers:	None.
Wards Affected:	All

Local Authority Comparators - Taxi Fees February 2021								
Local Authority	Taxi Driver's Grant Fee	Duration	Taxi Driver's Renewal Fee	Duration	Taxi Licence Grant Fee	Duration	Taxi Licence Renewal Fee	Duration
West Dunbartonshire	£284.50	1 year	£284.50	1 year	£638.50	3 years	£638.50	3 years
Edinburgh	£194.00	1 year	£118.00	1 year	£673.00	1 year	£365.00	1 year
Glasgow City	£162.00	3 years	£162.00	3 years	£402.00	3 years	£402.00	3 years
East Dunbartonshire	£189.00	3 years	£189.00	3 years	£404.52	3 years	£404.52	3 years
Falkirk	£212.00	1 year	£111.00 £268.00	1 year 3 years	£254.00	1 year	£138.00 £330.00	1 year 3 years
North Lanarkshire	£175.00	1 year	£160	1 year	£485.00	3 years	£426.00	3 years
Aberdeen City	£50.00	1 year	£105.00	3 years	£395.00	1 year	£215.00	1 year
Dundee	£195.00	3 years	£195.00	3 years	£240.00	1 year	£240.00	1 year

For noting:-

Over a 6 year period the amount of fees a driver and operator would pay are as follows:-

Local Authority	Taxi Driver's	Taxi Licence
West Dunbartonshire	£1707	£1277
Edinburgh	£784	£2498
Glasgow City	£324	£804
East Dunbartonshire	£378	£809
Falkirk	£702	£998
North Lanarkshire	£975	£911
Aberdeen City	£255	£1470
Dundee	£1170	£1440