

OBrien, Patrick

From: OBrien, Patrick on behalf of Licensing Team
Sent: 04 November 2010 15:46
To: 'Mike'
Subject: RE: Consultation on Hackney carriage and private Hire Fees

Dear Mr Patchett,
Thank you for comment on the proposed fee increases.

The background to these proposed rates of increase is that for the first time our new system can now accurately determine the individual costs and officer time necessary to produce individual items. That is why, for example, in the case of renewing a drivers badge – which is valid for 3 years – the proposed cost will actually reduce by over £7, representing a reduction of more than 15%. This is a key licence as everybody involved in the trade must have one, irrespective of whether they are employed or work for themselves so this benefit can immediately be passed on to the trade in these commercially challenging times.

To put the other proposed charges – which essentially are the main recurring fees rather than one off replacement issues – into perspective I would point out that the cost of granting a private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licence will only increase by 32 pence per week. Similarly, the annual cost of renewing these licences will increase by a mere 18 pence per week. You will be interested to know that the renewal of an operators licence will only increase by 16 pence per week.

I have calculated, based on the proposed figures, that the net cost to someone like yourself renewing a 3 year drivers badge, renewing an annual operators licence and an annual private hire vehicle licence over a 3 year period - equates to an increase of just 30 pence per week. You may feel these increases are excessive whilst others may not – that is the purpose of the consultation process.

As to the cost of replacing stickers etc I would point out that last year this department issued a total of 5 so it is not expected that this will have a major and widespread impact on taxis.

I hope this has been of assistance.

Yours sincerely
Patrick
Licensing Officer

From: Mike [mailto:mike@prestigettravelnorfolk.co.uk]
Sent: 03 November 2010 12:31
To: Licensing Team
Subject: Consultation on Hackney carriage and private Hire Fees

Dear Licensing team,

I am in receipt of your correspondence regarding the above mentioned fee's and your request for comments.

I must start by expressing my shock at receiving this proposal at a time when the rest of the country is desperately struggling to reduce costs, why does the licensing team believe that they are exempt this process. As a self employed person operating a business in a climate of recession I am desperately cutting my costs wherever possible in order to survive and continue to offer a quality service. Your proposal to increase costs will compound the difficulties we are already experiencing.

If I was to adopt the same policy of increasing my sale prices as opposed to reducing my costs I would very quickly be out of business. Unfortunately I am not in the same privileged position as yourselves, my customers are free to shop elsewhere whilst yours are captive. I do not find this fair that you should

04/11/2010

now exploit your position and impose price increases some of which are in excess of 300%.

It may help me to understand had you included an explanation and breakdown of costs. For example a simple sticker will have it's cost increased from £10.00 to £50.06 WHY ?.

I look forward to receiving your comments.....

Yours Sincerely
Mike Patchett

Prestige Travel (Watton)

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OBrien, Patrick

From: OBrien, Patrick on behalf of Licensing Team
Sent: 04 November 2010 13:05
To: 'peter.rudling@btinternet.com'
Cc: Hewett, Paul
Subject: RE: Consultation on Proposed Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Fee Increases

Dear Mr Rudling,

Thank you for your email concerning the proposed review of HC and PH charges. (As you can see I have copied in your Ward Member Mr Hewitt who forwarded your concerns to this office.)

Firstly, let me agree that sending 3 letters to you on this matter seems unnecessary. The reason, as you have suspected, is due to the fact that you hold 3 separate licences with this Dept – namely operator, driver and vehicle. Our new computerised system should have filtered out duplication – but due to the fact this was the initial general mailing it appears that on this occasion the filter did not come into play. This is a technical issue which has since been addressed. However I would point out that the letter(s) have achieved their purpose in that you have been consulted in a detail and in a timely manner. Your subsequent comment is welcomed.

The background to these proposed rates of increase is that for the first time our new system can now accurately determine the individual costs and officer time necessary to produce individual items. That is why, for example, in the case of renewing a drivers badge – which is valid for 3 years – the proposed cost will actually reduce by over £7, representing a reduction of more than 15%. This is a key licence as everybody involved in the trade must have one, irrespective of whether they are employed or work for themselves so this benefit can immediately be passed on to the trade in these commercially challenging times.

To put the other proposed charges – which essentially are the main recurring fees rather than one off replacement issues – into perspective I would point out that the cost of granting a private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licence will only increase by 32 pence per week. Similarly, the annual cost of renewing these licences will increase by a mere 18 pence per week. You will be interested to know that the renewal of an operators licence will only increase by 16 pence per week.

I have calculated, based on the proposed figures, that the net cost to someone like your self renewing a 3 year drivers badge, renewing an annual operators licence and an annual private hire vehicle licence over a 3 year period - equates to an increase of just 30 pence per week. You may feel these increases are excessive whilst others may not – that is the purpose of the consultation process.

In the interests of clarity I have rounded up these weekly increases to the nearest penny. As to the rounding up issue mentioned in your email, the proposed renewal of a drivers badge may be rounded up from £102.98 to £103 and also the proposed cost of a trailer grant may be rounded down from £108.17 to £108. It is likely that the reason for this would be to simplify administrative and payment procedures. The initial calculations of proposed charges - which are very detailed - clearly reflect the degree of accuracy obtained by analysing our costs and administrative procedures and as such only requisite increases

04/11/2010

would be applied.

I trust this explanation addresses your concerns and once again thank you for taking the time to respond.

Yours sincerely

Patrick O'Brien
Licensing Officer

From: Hewett, Paul
Sent: 03 November 2010 22:39
To: Licensing Team
Subject: FW: Consultation on Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Fees

Hi there

I believe Mr Rudling may have sent his comments directly to you, but I would be grateful to be cc'd into any reply. In particular, I would also be grateful to learn as to the background behind the scale of the uplift of the charges, and the official response as to why three letters were sent to him (I think I can see why, though).

All the very best

Paul

Paul Hewett, Ward Member, Shipdham

From: Paul Hewett [mailto:phewett@sky.com]
Sent: 03 November 2010 19:23
To: Hewett, Paul
Subject: FW: Consultation on Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Fees

From: PETER RUDLING [mailto:peter.rudling@btinternet.com]
Sent: 03 November 2010 15:30
To: phewett@lineone.net
Subject: Consultation on Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Fees

Dear Paul,

I attach a copy of a letter I have received from Breckland Vehicle Licensing Team, together with a copy of my response.

I look forward to hearing from you with any comments you may have in connection with this matter.

As you can see from my response, their fee increases appear to be somewhat astronomical - in one instance, five fold.

Regards,
Peter Rudling,
Peter Rudling Travel
01362 821140
07776040004

04/11/2010

I have received your letter with enclosure relating to the proposed fees and charges, and would comment as follows:

In the current climate when most companies or businesses are holding their fee increases or even decreasing their fees to remain solvent, it is somewhat of a surprise to see the level of increases you are proposing to put in place.

Your administration costs may have been reduced, since three identical sets of letters were received at this same address. I feel this was an ineffective use of your resources. Surely one to the vehicle operator would have sufficed.

I feel it would have been very helpful to have received some sort of breakdown of how these increases have been arrived at, and your justification for the increase other than 'there has been no increase in fees in the last three years'.

You also state in your letter that the fees 'may be rounded to the nearest pound'., why has this not already been stated on the list, as it very difficult to see how these figures have been arrived at.

We feel that it is going to be very difficult to pass these fees on to our customers; who without, we would not be in business, and would therefore not require a Vehicle Licensing Department at Breckland Council.

Peter Rudling Travel,
Private Hire Operator Licence PO0014
3rd November 2010.

OBrien, Patrick

From: Hoven, Josie
Sent: 01 November 2010 13:50
To: Licensing Team
Subject: FW: Proposed fee increases

From: Ian Hunter [mailto:ikhunter1@btinternet.com]
Sent: 01 November 2010 13:09
To: Monument, Linda; Nunn, William; Hoven, Josie
Cc: julesmj@talktalk.net
Subject: Proposed fee increases

Dear Josie

Thank you for the notification of the proposed prices for fare increases.

Please forward specific details of how these increases have been calculated so I can explain to my colleagues how an increase of over **500%** for Replacement Sticky Labels is justified.

Please provide copies of your costings and calculations to substantiate all the increases you are proposing, to keep the numbers down lets say anything above the current rate of inflation of 5%, so that if a group of us should wish to take this before the committee we have the necessary documents to argue our case.

I can only presume that someone or a department feels these subtle rises are justified during a recession and rising fuel prices?

The last fare increase was approximately 4 years ago, ignoring the £0.20 on the pull off rate which the vast majority of the drivers *did not want* anyway and has since been rescinded. Diesel was then £0.86 a litre, we are currently paying a 38% increase which all drivers / companies are *still* taking as a direct hit to their profits.

I don't believe I am alone in saying that when the level of service for Taxi Drivers has significantly dropped with the introduction of the "call centre", the proposed increases which far exceed the rate of inflation, will not be received well by any driver. Whilst I appreciate that increases are needed and become necessary from time to time they are generally hoped to be fair and reasonable!

I trust someone has calculated how much extra it will now cost a driver under the proposed changes if they have a renewal and change their car within the same year? ... and this figure was seen as an acceptable increase!?

If we have to remove our customer discounts to pay for these "reasonable increases", please provide me with a contact name at the council should they require an explanation as I don't feel I can currently provide an honest answer.

I look forward to receiving the information requested above.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hunter

18/11/2010

OBrien, Patrick

From: OBrien, Patrick
Sent: 18 November 2010 16:39
To: Butcher, Stephanie
Subject: Response to fee increase - Hunter

Steph, please edit or amend as you see fit. The numbers are good. Pat

Dear Mr Hunter,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our letter detailing proposed increases to the hackney carriage and private hire licensing fees. Please note these are not fare increases, which you refer to in your e-mail. This is a separate matter entirely and I will confine my response to the contents set out in our Consultation letter of 28th October.

The background to these proposed rates of increase is that for the first time our new computerised licensing system can now accurately determine the individual costs and officer time necessary to produce individual items. The initial calculations of the proposed charges - which are both detailed and complex - clearly reflect the degree of accuracy obtained by analysing our costs and administrative procedures and as such only requisite increases would be applied.

That is why, for example, in the case of renewing a drivers badge - which is valid for 3 years - the proposed cost will actually fall by over £7, representing a reduction of more than 15%. This is a key licence as everybody involved in the trade must have one, irrespective of whether they are employed directly or work for themselves so this benefit can immediately be passed on to the trade as a whole. I am sure you will agree that in these commercially challenging times this will be welcomed by all.

This reduction will help to offset the increase in renewing a hackney carriage vehicle licence. In your own specific circumstances I have calculated, based on the proposed figures, that the net cost in renewing a 3 year drivers badge, and an annual hackney carriage vehicle licence over a 3 year period - equates to an increase of just 20p per week during this period.

To put the other proposed charges - which essentially are the main recurring fees rather than one off replacement issues - into perspective I would point out that the cost of granting an initial private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licence will only increase by 32p pence per week. Similarly, the annual cost of renewing these licences will increase by a mere 18p per week.

You may feel these increases are excessive whilst others may not - that is the purpose of the consultation process

As to the additional proposed increases relating to replacement issues these revised costs are based on many factors such as call centre time in arranging appointments, officer time in reviewing applications and administrative costs, coupled with the product and IT costs necessary to replace lost or damaged plates, stickers badges etc. You may be interested to know that the number of requests to replace such items is extremely low as almost all drivers tend to take care of such items in or on their vehicles. It is felt that these replacement costs will not significantly impact on the trade.

You specifically refer to the cost to a driver in transferring a licence to a new vehicle may be increased from £55 to £116.06. You should be aware that the time required to effect such a transfer and issue new plates, stickers and internal cards equate to the time required in issuing a new vehicle licence. This is why the proposed cost of £116.06 is almost identical to the cost of an initial grant of a vehicle licence at £116.58. The shortfall of just 52p gives an indication of just how accurately our costings are measured and evaluated using our new system and how no unnecessary increases are to be applied.

Finally I note your concerns regarding fuel rates and I would like to inform you that a Hackney Carriage fare review has been requested by members of the trade and is currently underway. Again this will go out to consultation and I would then welcome any detailed proposals you wish to make.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to respond.

18/11/2010

Patrick O'Brien | Licensing Officer | **Breckland Council**

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2 Hall Cottages
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NR19 2QH

Breckland Council Licensing Team
Elizabeth House
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Dereham
NR19 1EE

13th November 2010

Dear Licensing Team,

Thank you for your invitation to respond and protest at the proposed huge hike in the current taxi fees and charges.

These increases are being considered at entirely the wrong time, Breckland Council should be looking at ways to reduce charges and there are various ways this could be achieved. One way is to reduce the overstaffing at council head office. Another way is to phase out the final salary pension scheme, this is unaffordable to council tax payers, the council knows this and does not act.

Generally speaking the taxi operators enjoy a good relationship with the licensing team, however we all know that if it was administered by a private sector organisation there would be two three people less in the department.

These unnecessary alterations to the plates must account for some of your increase, however there have been no licensing violations according to one of your team and anyway how much does four bits of plastic cost? Why the extra detail on the plate and stickers? Looks like too much time on someone's hands to me We don't know your formula for calculating that the license is undercosted.

Cost increases often occur in local government when procurement managers are too cosy with suppliers. I am, of course, not suggesting that this is the case with Breckland Council but has the council tried to find a cheaper supplier?, probably not.

The various replacement hikes are just out of all proportion.

Comments made by the idiot Sherwood are not helpful - he does not live in the real world, a taxi driver has seen huge increases in fuel, insurance and other costs, he forgets he is pure expense to the tax payer with not much in return in his case.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Booker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'J'.

Dear Mr Turner,

Yes that is the proposed figure, which will help to offset the proposed increases to for example renewal of a HC/PH vehicle – which equates to an extra 18p per day.

Thanks for your comment.

Yours sincerely
Patrick O'Brien
Licensing Officer

From: Cressingham Taxis [mailto:cressingham.taxis@btinternet.com]

Sent: 04 November 2010 14:03

To: Licensing Team

Subject: Licensing fees

Dear licensing team,

I note that the proposed change to a Taxi Driver Renewal is a 6% decrease (£110 down to £103) according to the table we have received from you.

Is that correct or a typo?

Thank you, Paul Turner.

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