

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE - 8 JANUARY 2021

FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2021-2022 - LICENSING SERVICE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of the annual review of budgets, decisions are required to agree any non-statutory fees and charges for the forthcoming financial year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility for the administration and enforcement of a wide range of licences, registrations and permits. Many of these schemes allow the Council to charge a fee, payable by an applicant for a licence, permit or registration, in order to cover the costs of the administration of those licence types.
- 2.2 The key principle for setting Licensing fees, is that they should be reasonable and relate to the costs of performing the function, including staffing, administration, testing, inspections, hearings, regulation and appeals.
- 2.3 The basis in setting these fees is generally to ensure cost recovery, or as close to it as possible. Legal cases over the years have confirmed that licensing fees may not be used to generate a profit for councils and that fees should be reviewed regularly to ensure that neither a significant surplus nor deficit is created.
- 2.4 Fees are set under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005 and the Council has no discretion in amending these. Gambling premises licence fees are capped and permit and lottery fees are fixed amounts. The fee regimes for both have not been revised since the implementation of both Acts in 2005 and 2007 respectively.
- 2.5 However, the Council is able to set fees for a number of other licence types; Taxis (drivers, vehicles and operators), Animal Welfare (boarding breeding, riding and pet shops), Piercing (tattoo, acupuncture and skin piercing) and Pleasure boats (boatmen and vessels), residential caravan sites and scrap metal dealers (site and collectors).

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION;

- 3.1 The setting of discretionary fees for Licensing is not a Portfolio Holder decision and fees and charges must be formally approved by the Council's General Purposes and Licensing Committee before they may be implemented. In addition, any proposed increase to taxi licensing fees must be advertised and consulted on.
- 3.2 The Coronavirus/Covid 19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy and businesses in the New Forest have been affected by a reduction in trade and loss of income. Whilst the Licensing Service was unable to provide refunds or reductions in fees, it has worked with the businesses to assist them in continuing to operate as far as possible.

3.3 In order to further support the continuation of those businesses who have struggled financially this year, Members are asked to consider not raising licensing fees for 2021/22. This should assist businesses that are trying to recover and stabilise the future income for the Council.

3.4 It is proposed that fees are fully reviewed next year for 2022/23 when the impact of the pandemic should be known and the business climate will be more stable.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Any financial implications have been reported for budgetary control and as part of the financial plan.

5. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None

7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATION

7.1 None

8. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Member of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee are asked to:

9.1 Agree the recommended fees for the financial year 2021/22 as set out in Appendix A

For further information:

Joanne McClay
Service Manager (Environmental and Regulation)
Email: joanne.mcclay@nfdc.gov.uk

Christa Ferguson
Licensing Manager
Email: christa.ferguson@nfdc.gov.uk