

Council – 24 February 2025

Licensing Fees and Charges 2025 – 2026

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report presents the proposed fees and charges for the Council's licensing functions. They have been reviewed and set at a level calculated to cover the cost of delivering the services.</p> <p>Council is asked to approve of the fees and charges for 2025-26 as listed in Appendix 1, following the recommendation by General Purposes and Licensing Committee on 10 January 2025.</p>
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That Council agree and approve the proposed fees and charges for the financial year 2025–26 as set out in Appendix 1; and2. That the power to set the scale of fees and charges for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences, including to consider any objections made in respect of the proposed fees, be delegated to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>The local authority is able to recover the costs associated with undertaking its licensing functions, where these fees are not statutorily set. The cost of providing these functions has been fully costed, and proposed fees have been adjusted where necessary.</p> <p>Where appropriate, new fees have been added to reflect the costs associated with the issue of licenses under new legislation.</p> <p>Additionally, in some cases the way in which fees are charged has been amended to better reflect the way in which applications are received and administered.</p>
Ward(s)	All

Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Dan Poole
Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Strategic Director of Housing & Communities
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Introduction

1. As part of the annual review of budgets, decisions are required by the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, to agree any non-statutory licensing fees and charges for the forthcoming financial year.
2. This report details the proposed fees and charges in **Appendix 1** for licences and registrations for 2025 - 2026 for the following work areas – animal welfare licensing, caravan site licensing, skin piercing registrations, gambling, pleasure boats, boatmen and pavement licences.

Background

3. The Council has a statutory responsibility for the administration and enforcement of a wide range of licences, registrations and permits. Many of these allow the Council to set and charge a fee, to cover the costs of the administration and issue of these permissions.
4. The basis in setting these fees is to ensure they are reasonable and cover the costs of performing the functions which includes, administration, officer costs for undertaking inspections, testing and hearings. Costs associated with enforcement activity, for example

relating to premises which are operating without a licence, or breach of licence conditions cannot be included in the license fee.

5. Furthermore, legal cases such as *Hemming v Westminster City Council* 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.
6. Fees set under the Licensing Act 2003, are set centrally by Government and the Council has no discretion to review or amend these. The current fee structure was set when the Act came into force in November 2005 and the fee regime has not been revised since this date.
7. The Council is, however, able to set fees for the following licence types:
 - pavement licences.
 - gambling establishments.
 - animal welfare (boarding, home boarding, dog breeding, riding establishments, pet shops and zoos).
 - residential caravan sites.
 - skin piercing (tattooing, acupuncture, electrolysis, cosmetic piercing and semi-permanent skin colouring).
 - pavement licences.
 - pleasure boats (boatmen and vessels) and
 - taxis and private hire (drivers, vehicles and operators)

Issues for consideration

8. The setting of discretionary fees for the licensing of the above matters, must be formally agreed by the Council's General Purposes and Licensing Committee prior to approval by Council.
9. The draft Taxi Licensing Policy has been reviewed following a consultation process on new proposals and an amended draft policy was considered by the General Purposes and Licensing Committee on 10 January 2025. Once the Policy is approved by Council, any new process requirements will need to be reviewed and built into the assessment for the cost recovery of issuing these licences. Taxi licensing fees will therefore be consulted on after adoption and publishing of the policy, therefore they are not proposed to change at this time.
10. The proposed fees for licences and permits in **Appendix 1** have been increased following a detailed review of the cost to deliver each function and have also been benchmarked against similar and neighbouring local authorities.

Pavement Licences

11. The Business and Planning Act 2020 (BPA) provided temporary permissions following the covid pandemic, which allowed businesses such as public houses, cafes, bars and restaurants to place chairs and tables over part of the highway adjacent to their premises.
12. This Act has since been amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which introduced a permanent pavement licensing scheme from 31 March 2024. Fees for the application can be set locally but are capped at a maximum of £500 for first time applications and £350 for renewals. The proposed new fees in Appendix 1 are for full cost recovery of this application process.

Gambling fees

13. All permits and lottery fees set under the Gambling Act 2005 are statutorily set, whereas gambling premises licence fees are capped, with the discretion for fee setting up to this level. These gambling premises licences have been increased in line with inflation.

Animal welfare fees

14. Animal welfare licensing fees have been reviewed and increased where required and the fee structure revised, to recover all costs relating to the processing and issue of different licence types. New applications for all animal welfare applications have been costed at a higher level than renewal licences, based on additional officer time in providing advice and assistance during the initial licensing process.

Skin piercing fees

15. Skin piercing registration fees have been reviewed and a further breakdown of registration options provided for customers, which better represent the costs of the different application processes. The two additional fee categories are:
 - A combined cost for a practitioner and premises registration in one single application,
 - A cost for registering additional practitioners, when applied for at the same time as a premises/practitioner application.
16. The fee for a practitioner application alone has been substantially increased. This proposed fee covers the full costs of administering such an application when there is no premises application. It is important to note, that as with all skin piercing fees, this is a one-off fee.

17. The fee for a business to be registered to undertake additional skin piercing activities has also been increased, to reflect the full cost of administering this service.

Caravan sites fees

18. Caravan site fees have also been raised to reflect the increased cost of delivering the service.

Corporate plan priorities

19. **Theme:**
Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.
Future New Forest. Transforming tomorrow, together.
20. **Corporate Plan Objective:**
Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.
Being financially responsible.
21. **Service Objective:**
Implementation of the Environmental and Regulation Service Plans.

Consultation undertaken

22. This report has been reviewed by EMT, the Portfolio Holder and the General Purposes and Licensing Committee.
23. The General Purposes and Licensing Committee on 10 January 2025 considered the proposed fees and charges for the 2025-26 financial year. The Committee debated the proposed introduction of licence fees for pavement licences and whether there should be no charge in order to support local businesses. It was concluded that fees and charges should be across all licensing services, to have a fair and consistent approach. It was also agreed that fees and charges should recover the cost of providing the service but not generate a profit.

Financial and resource implications

24. There will be no additional costs in adoption of these fees and changes, and the new charges are likely to better offset the costs of the licensing work, therefore increasing income and closing the income-cost gap.

Legal implications

25. The fees and charges review was undertaken in line with legislation and statutory guidance with the aim of ensuring full cost recovery.

Risk Assessment

26. A formal risk assessment is not required.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

27. There are no direct climate implications.

Equalities implications

28. There are no direct equalities implications.

Crime and disorder implications

29. There are no direct crime and disorder implications.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

30. There are no direct implications.

Conclusions

31. The setting of the proposed licensing fees and charges has been through a rigorous process, to cost the delivery of the service to businesses and members of the public.

32. The increased fees are proposed to take effect from 1 April 2025.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed fees for 2025 - 2026

Background Papers:

[Mobile Homes Act 2013: a guide for local authorities on setting licence fees](#)

[Mobile homes: a guide for local authorities on setting fees for the fit and proper person test](#)

[Animal activity licensing process: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

[LGA guidance on locally set licensing fees | Local Government Association](#)