

Grove/City Centre Private Hire

320 High Street,

Tunstall,

ST6 5XG

Dear Sir,

This letter is written on behalf of Grove/City Centre Private Hire and the numerous Licensed Drivers and vehicle owners who operate under our Private Hire Operators licence. This letter is written to object to the proposed rise in the Licence Fees announced recently by the Borough Council. The notice was published and advertised on the 16th October 2020 giving a 28-day period in which to object.

There is no reason given within the notice as to why the increase in fees is required and indeed there were no reasons given for the previous rise in fees which was approved in April 2020 and implemented in June 2020 only 4 months ago.

There is no justification for these rises as the cost of administering the Licensing Department has not increased and the Service provided by the Licensing Department and the Garage has got progressively worse not better. There are numerous delays, inaccurate information passed to Licence holders and changes in procedures and requirements that have resulted in many Licence holders losing their employment, ability to earn a living or even to lose their licences which makes the whole need to apply to increase the fees again less than 5 months after the last increase both unnecessary and unjustified.

Newcastle Borough Council have not given any justification for these proposed rises in fees and as the Local Government Ombudsman Directive states that the fees set for Taxi Licensing should be such that the fees covered the actual cost of Administering the Licensing Function, then surely the Council have to give the reason why the rise in fees is required.

The Taxi trade in Newcastle, like the rest of the country, is suffering financially because of the Covid 19 crisis and the number of customers and journeys has dropped dramatically. Many of the drivers have made the decision to stop working until the crisis is over and the country returns to a semblance of normality. As there is no sign of this occurring in the coming months there seems no reason to assume that the Taxi Trade will recover until the middle of next year, even the lifting of the lockdown will have little effect on the business as restrictions will still be in place until the crisis is finally over.

I would like to request that this consultation is postponed or delayed, considering that Covid Crisis and the restrictions imposed by the lock down are not due to be lifted until 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. There has been no opportunity to consult with the other Taxi Trade members during the current restrictions and therefore the trade has been unable to discuss this and make meaningful representation against the proposed rise. A postponement or delay would also give the Licensing Service the opportunity to give full justification for the proposed rise in fees.

The Notice produced by the Council states that any rise in fees will not be implemented until April 2021 so therefore a postponement until the New Year should not be an issue. As the requirement is for a 28 day consultation period over the proposals a new consultation could be commenced in the New Year

and there would still be time to have the 28 day consultation period before the implementation date of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

I would consider this a sensible and reasonable request and hope that the Licensing Service can agree there is sufficient time to complete a full consultation in the New Year before the implementation date of any rises and therefore postpone this .

Yours faithfully