

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Taxi and Private Hire (Dual) Three Year Driver Licences</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Licensing and Appeals Committee on 16 September 2014
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment

<p><b>OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY</b></p>
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<p>The introduction of three year driver licences will reduce the administrative burden and costs currently experienced by those employed in the taxi/private hire trade.</p>
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<p><b>RECOMMENDATION</b></p>
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<p>That the Licensing and Appeals Committee adopts a three year driver licensing policy as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.</p>
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<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p>
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<p>The Licensing and Appeals Committee approved, at its meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014, a consultation with the taxi/private hire trade to determine their views on the possible introduction of a three year licence.</p>
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<p>The trade have responded positively to the proposed change and the Licensing team believe it is a sensible efficiency measure.</p>
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## **Background**

Having received approval from the Licensing Committee to consult with the taxi/private hire trade, officers sent a letter to all taxi and private hire drivers to ascertain their views on the introduction of the three year licence.

Officers had intended to bring a report with these responses to Members at a meeting scheduled for the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014. At that time the Government were introducing a number of items into the Deregulation Bill to be read in the House of Lords. One of these items was the issue of three year driver licences. Consequently it was then considered prudent to delay the report until the Government's position became clearer.

The Deregulation Bill has received its second reading in the Lords on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and is now at the Committee stage. It is anticipated that the Bill will continue through its passage in the House of Lords with minor amendments being made on route. To date these amendments do not alter the Government's stance on three year driver licences. The Government have indicated that the Bill should receive Royal Assent before the end of 2014.

The Government has extracted the three year licence from the Taxi and Private Hire Bill itself and by adding it to the Deregulation Bill it appears that it wishes this matter to become law sooner rather than later. At this time the Government has made it clear that other than those items included in the Deregulation Bill, taxi and private hire legislative changes have been placed on hold. At the present time the Government has stated that there will be no consultation on taxi and private hire reform started during this parliament.

The response to the Council's consultation about the possible introduction of three year licenses is summarised in appendix 1. They are generally positive. Of the 69 persons responding,(at the time of writing), 61 were in favour of the three year licence, 5 were against and 3 were undecided.

## **Analysis of Issues**

This is a policy decision for the Licensing and Appeals Committee to determine if they wish to implement the policy change to allow 3 year licenses before the change in legislation. It is anticipated that this change will be made via legislation at some point in the future, and given the positive response from the trade there does not seem to be any logical reason to delay its implementation. However members may feel it sensible to await the Deregulation Bill.

Therefore there are two options;

1. Adopt a three year driver licensing policy as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. OR
2. Await the publication of the Deregulation legislation and implement when the formal time frame has been agreed.

Option 1 is recommended as the introduction of three year driver licences will reduce the administrative burden and costs currently experienced by those employed in the taxi/private hire trade and also reduce the administration the service undertakes in dealing with annual licenses.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

*The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.*

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Neutral	Yes	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Neutral	Yes	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Neutral	Yes	N/A

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Licensing operates on a cost recovery model; therefore any fees and charges set are dependent on the variety of factors which influence the cost of administering the licences that are issued and the compliance checks required to ensure the conditions of issue are met.

It is anticipated that this change will result in a reduction in administration for the service and this will be reflected in any new fees and charges.

### Cross-Council Implications

With three year licences in place, there should be a small reduction in the overall demand on customer services/reception staff.

### Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

None

### List of Background Papers

N/A

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APPENDIX 1

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1			
2	✓		A good idea but how does it work with regards to vehicle testing and how will it be charged?
3	✓		
4	✓		
5		✓	
6	✓		
7	✓		Very important is fee. How much you will charge for three years?
8	✓		
9		✓	
10	✓		Good Idea
11	✓		
12	✓		It's a very good idea to renew every three years
13	✓		I think it is a good idea as it will save a lot of council's time as well as drivers. I am happy for this to go ahead.
14	✓		
15	✓		I think that it is a good idea for every three year renewal
16	✓		
17	✓		That will be a helpful good idea, it's good for you and us I think it's good for everyone
18	✓		
19	✓		
20	✓		It is a good decision to save time, paper work and cost. But it would be the best if you can save some driver's cost while dropping some price down when we're going to pay for three years in one payment
21	✓		Also please drop the price down when we'll pay for three years at once
22	✓		

- 23 ✓
- 24 ✓ I completely agree with this
- 25 ✓ I am very happy about this decision
- 26 ✓
- 27 ✓ I would like to have 3 years licence. This would save time
- 28 ✓ It's a good idea and would save time as well.
- 29 ✓
- 30 ✓
- 31 ✓ I'm completely in favour of extending three years licence decision
- 32 ✓ ✓
- 33 ✓
- 34 ✓
- 35 ✓ For me it would be beneficial as I have 2 jobs so I wouldn't have to take time off work to come in each year. How would this affect cost? Surely this will come down
- 36 ✓ It's a great idea
- 37 ✓
- 38 ✓ Good idea. Cost of this should be less due to admin work being reduced
- 39 ✓ For once a fantastic idea. Why do we always follow other councils and not lead, i.e. in 8 years, I have not even been asked once to use my wheelchair facility on the ranks. Maybe abolition or reduction of the number of WAV taxis would be our first leading idea in the country one day
- 40 ✓ I'm assuming that as admin will be dramatically reduced that this also means the cost to the driver will reduce accordingly?
- 41 ✓
- 42 ✓ Good idea
- 43 ✓
- 44 ✓ Yes this is a good idea as it will be more economical for the council and beneficial for the taxi drivers as it will save time on annual renewals

- 45 ✓
- 46 ✓ Good idea, save time and admin
- 47 ✓ As long as only charge the same as a single year. Could not find three years money in one go, and only one admin charge
- 48 ✓ As long as you only pay the same for three years as we do for one
- 49 ✓ Totally agreed & need to imply ASAP
- 50 ✓
- 51 ✓ Good idea, I'm all for this introduction
- 52 ✓
- 53 ✓
- 54 ✓
- 55 ✓
- 56 ✓
- 57 ✓ I think that it is a very good idea and hope to be approved
- 58 ✓ ✓ Because it will be very hard to pay 3 years in one go
- 59 ✓
- 60 ✓ Will be cost effective & time saving. Great idea
- 61 ✓
- 62 ✓
- 63 ✓ There is a great feeling that the council's licensing costs are too high - to make massive savings in the issuing costs and not reduce pricing to drivers is cynical and unforgiveable; especially on top of the high cost of medicals compared to Bracknell
- 64 ✓ I think it is the best way. To save time of council and drivers
- 65 ✓
- 66 ✓ Hopefully the fees will come down as well

Reduction of unnecessary administration costs is what all sensible National and Local Tax Payers desire and that is what clearly the Government is wanting to achieve, A 3 year time scale is a good start to gain experience on how to administer and quantify the merits on behalf of the Wokingham Council Tax Payer. As additional comments, I would like to add that I have always favoured a driver category that allows the legal driving of the general public for hire and reward as part of the DVLC driving licence. (Similar to HGV national categories; once you are qualified, and as long as you have not fallen foul of conditions, then it remains part of the licence and should be displayed within the vehicle. The Police would have to be involved but they are in any case regarding driving licences. I have always believed the general public are less concerned about behind the scenes local administration and are more keen on standardised driver accreditation and vehicle safety and cleanliness. The Public Carriage office in London achieves this with a very active Inspectorate and although I have no access to figures and costs I would bet the Government are looking to roll something out along their line, where a system is maintained with relatively few administrators

It's a very good idea to save time and resources under current economical climate within the Licensing Department, as I believe that it is a shared view among all our colleagues that this department could be much better organised by only two intelligent people rather than many currently employed in this department within Wokingham Council

This should also result in a reduction of our licensing fees by more than 50%. Furthermore, this proposal will be welcome ONLY if the yearly licensing fees be reconsidered to this proposal (full fee as currently stands for the first year and a charge of "50 PENCE" only for the following year 2 and 3) as it will not cost any more to print a piece of paper once for 3 years, also no one really knows whether or not they like or are able to continue in this profession for the next 2 or 3 years and would be unfair to be charge such fee for nothing

67

✓

6

68

?

?

69