



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE - 10 FEBRUARY 2021
Subject	CONSIDERATION OF LICENCE DEFERRALS
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr. Andrew Doherty - Cabinet Member for Waste, Flooding and Environmental Health Email: andrew.doherty@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Michelle Bignell, Service Leader (Licensing and Business Support) Tel: 01285 623000 Email: michelle.bignell@publicagroup.uk
Summary	For the Committee to consider that licences can be deferred until a later date to assist licence holders during the pandemic
Annexes	None
Recommendation	That the Committee RESOLVES to permit any licence holders that have licence renewals due before 30 th September 2021 to defer until 31 December 2021
Corporate priorities	Ensure that services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Consultation with Chair and Vice Chair of Licensing Committee 14 January 2021, Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Licensing Team has received requests from a handful of licence holders (predominantly taxi/private hire) to put renewals on hold until a date when the trade picks up again. As there are a number of renewals in the near future it is possible that further requests will be received.
- 1.2. In 'normal' times any late renewal would be treated as a new application which is more costly and requires additional measures (for example Street Trading would require a consultation, driver licences would require knowledge tests). Requests to process late renewals can result in a Committee meeting to eliminate certain requirements.
- 1.3. In March 2020, a decision was made by the Head of Paid Service using emergency provisions to permit a deferral scheme until the end of September 2020. This entitled licence holders to put renewals on hold due to businesses suffering very little or no trade during the first lockdown. This meant that the licence holder did not have to pay out for expensive insurances and that the licence period was not wasted.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1. The licence deferral scheme that was permitted in the first lockdown under emergency powers is permitted again until 30 September 2021 to enable licence holders to ease the renewal burden. This would be permitted to all types of licensing but would predominantly be utilised by the taxi/private hire trade that have been most impacted on by the pandemic and the third lockdown.
- 2.2. Licence holders must make applications by 31 December 2021 and all requirements must still be in place (e.g. DBS/medical/insurance). This would tie in with the vaccination programme timescales and hopefully some glimmer of normality returning in the latter part of this year.
- 2.3. The Licensing Committee Chair and Vice Chair were consulted on 14 January 2021 and were both fully supportive of this proposal.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are 99 licences due for renewal prior to 31 March 2021. Deferring these licence renewals will result in an income loss of around £29,033 in the 2020/21 financial year. The Council is reporting the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic regularly to Government. The Government is partially compensating Councils for income losses from sales, fees and charges. Of the £29,033 income loss, £20,903 is recoverable as compensation under the Government Sales, Fees and Charges Scheme. The remaining £8,129 will be an in-year budget issue, managed through the Council's financial performance process.
- 3.2. There would be no financial impact on the forecasting of 2021/22 budget as deferred applications would be received by 31 December 2021. There are 164 licences due for renewal between 1 April and 30 September 2021.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The legal team have been consulted in the writing of this proposal and there are no legal implications with deferring applications.

- 4.2. There is a policy implication that within taxi/private hire work, we do have a 15 year age limit on vehicles. For this year only, it is requested that we would permit the renewal application providing that the vehicle did not exceed 15 years at the original expiry date (so it may be 16 years on expiry).

5. RISKS

- 5.1. There is a small possibility that those who choose to defer may carry on working whilst unlicensed.
- 5.2. There is a risk that licence holders may not renew due to financial difficulties and carry on working unlicensed.
- 5.3. The Licensing Team work closely with the Counter Fraud Team and would refer any allegations with evidence for investigation.

6. REVIEW

- 6.1. It is proposed that this decision is reviewed in July 2021 to see if there is a need to extend the scheme.

(END)