LICENSING AND REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

02 FEBRUARY 2026

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – CORPORATE POLICY & SUPPORT

A.7 <u>Proposed Licensing Fees and Charges for 2026/27</u>
(Report prepared by Michael Cook and Keith Simmons)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek the Committee's approval to a schedule of fees and charges 2026/27 for licensing applications etc within the responsibility of the Governance Directorate. The current fees and charges and proposals for fees and charges in 2026/27 are set out at Appendix A to this report.

Appendix A sets out those licensing fees where the Council has discretion over the level of fee, those where the Council must charge a nationally prescribed fee and those where the chargeable fee is subject to a nationally prescribed maximum.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 for licensing applications etc within the responsibility of the Governance Directorate. These are within Appendix A to this report.

- Any amendments to income budgets that are required to reflect changes to fees and charges will be included in the detailed budget proposals for 2026/27 that will be considered by Cabinet/Council.

- The Council needs to demonstrate that the fees it charges for such licences have been set in accordance with the law and best practice, so as to recover its allowable costs in administering the various licensing regimes for which it is responsible.

- Fees should be set so as to avoid either a surplus or a subsidy where possible and adjusted, if necessary, in succeeding years to achieve and maintain the correct balance.

- This report sets out the revised fees and charges for licences and associated items, which it is proposed should take effect from April 2026.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that:

1) **the proposed licensing fees and charges set out in Appendix A be approved with effect from April 2026 (Note: this recommendation only applies to those fees and charges where the Council has the discretion to determine the said fee);**

2) **the Licensing Manager be authorised to publish the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing fees in accordance with the relevant legislative provisions (should any changes be applicable to advertise; and**

3) **that, further to 2) above, the Assistant Director, Corporate Policy and Support, be authorised to consider any objections received and determine the final fees payable in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)
To enable the implementation of a revised fees and charges schedule for 2026/27. The Council has made provision in its constitution for the setting of fees for Licences falling within the remit of this Committee to be determined by it.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED
As alternative options, where discretion exists for the Council, consideration has been given to setting fees and charges that did not recover the Council's costs in administering the relevant licensing functions. These were discounted as to do so would either leave Council Tax payers to meet costs of licensing that legally may be recovered or otherwise lead to a surplus and this would have meant that that the Council was acting contrary to law.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES
The forecasting and budget setting process, including fees and charges, will have direct implications for the Council's ability to deliver on its objectives and priorities. The forecast seeks to establish a sound and sustainable budget year on year through maximising income, including income raised from fees and charges, whilst limiting reductions in services provided to residents, businesses and visitors.
OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT
The following Council Units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report: Finance. Depending on Members decision, in respect of certain fees, there is a requirement to publicise any proposed increases in Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle/Operator license fees, in a local newspaper. This allows a period for objections to be made. How this consultation takes places is set out within legislation.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)			
Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	**No**	**If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision**	☐ **Significant effect on two or more wards** ☐ **Involves £100,000 expenditure/income** ☐ **Is otherwise significant for the service budget**
		And when was the proposed decision	**Not applicable**

		published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	

The arrangements for setting and agreeing a budget and for the setting and collection of council tax are defined in the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The previous legislation defining the arrangements for charging, collecting and pooling of Business Rates was contained within the Local Government Finance Act 1988. These have both been amended as appropriate to reflect the introduction of the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

Trading and the power to charge are set out in the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 and the Local Government Act 2003 – Section 93 respectively. The latter also requires that charges for discretionary services should be on a cost recovery basis.

The express legislative powers in respect of the various district areas of licensing are set out below:

Licence Type	**Charging Power**
Scrap Metal Dealers	Paragraph 6 of Schedule 1 to the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013
Pleasure Boats and Boatmen	Section 94 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907
Pet Shop Licences	Section 1(2) of the Pet Animals Act 1951
Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Drivers' Licences	Section 53(2) of Part II to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles and Private Hire Operators 'Licences	Section 70(1) of Part II to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
Sex Establishment (Sex Shops and Sexual Entertainment Venues) Licences	Paragraph 19 of Schedule 3 to Part II of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
Street Trading Consents	Paragraphs 9(1) and 9(5) of Schedule 4 to Part III of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
Authorisations under the Licensing Act 2003	Various Sections of the Licensing Act 2003 and Regulations under the Licensing Act 2003 (Fees) Regulations 2005
Authorisations under the Gambling Act 2005	Various Sections of the Gambling Act 2005 and Regulations under the Gambling (Premises Licence Fees)(England and Wales) Regulations 2007

Pavement Licence	Business and Planning Act 2020 (the 2020 Act) as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

There is no power to charge for Street Collection and House to House Collection Permits. In respect of authorisations under the Licensing Act 2003, the fees and charges are set nationally by central Government. Fees and charges in respect of authorisations under the Gambling Act 2005 are subject to a maximum rate prescribed by central Government. The Council may set fees for such authorisations, having had regard to its costs, up to the prescribed maximums.

The legislative provisions set out in the above table have been considered in the preparation of this report. Where discretion exists for licensing authorities to set the fee to be charged, they must have regard to the decision in R v Manchester City Council, ex Parte King. By virtue of that case, it would not be lawful to seek any more than to recover the costs of administering the particular licensing function and be used for generating income. More recently, the Supreme Court determined the case of R (on the application of Hemming (t/a Simply Pleasure Ltd) and others) v Westminster City Council 2015 where the restrictions on licensing authorities to charge fees related to licensing functions was updated in respect of charging for the procedural formalities of a licensing application.

☑	**The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

The comments of the Monitoring Officer have been reflected in the report as it has been prepared.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Finance and other resources

Where the Council has a discretion over fees and charges, these have been reviewed against the key principles that underpin the long-term forecast. Fees should be set so as to avoid either a surplus or a subsidiary where possible and adjusted, if necessary, in succeeding years to achieve and maintain the correct balance.

Given the significant on-going financial challenges faced by the Council from 2025/26, a key underlying principle is to consider inflationary increases wherever possible to support corresponding increases in the Council's own costs in delivering the associated service(s). The current rate of inflation remains relatively high and it may not necessarily be practical / possible to 'translate' such an increase into the actual fee increase proposed.

Therefore, set against this inflationary context, any proposed increases in fees and charges must be balanced against other considerations / market conditions, whilst also recognising the restrictions placed on local authorities in terms of setting fees and charges as set out within the legal section above. Further details relating to any proposed increases to fees and charges is set out below.

☑	**The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

Beyond the general content of this report there are no further comments to be set out here.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.	The monitoring of reserves deployed to licensing activities is a critical function to setting fees to recover those costs and ensure licencing is sustainable where a discretion exists. This report sets out that the Council will be supported in decision making on fees and charges for licensing. The approach to licensing fee setting seeks to ensure it is efficient and economical.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.	
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

The report sets out the proposed fees and charges to be charged from April 2026 (or as soon as is practicable thereafter) and invites the Committee to consider approving these as set out in Appendix A. Several fees and charges are set by Government nationally and therefore the Council has no discretion to alter those fees.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

The risk in setting any fee and charge is that it does not provide, due to change in usage, for the projected income. Apart from the comments in Legal Implications that it would be unlawful if certain fees were increased by more than the cost of administering the function and be used for generating income, a significant increase in charges may in any event discourage the public from using a service resulting in an overall reduction in income. The income received by the Council is regularly monitored and any significant variation would be reported to the Cabinet/Portfolio Holder.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the District Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

No direct equality implications have been identified and, accordingly, an Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as part of this process.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

Well-regulated activities should of themselves contribute to the overall economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the District. The fees proposed seek to support an efficient licensing function to support well regulated licensed activities accounted in the District.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030	
There are no direct implications for climate change, arising from the recommendations as set out in this report.	
OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS	
Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.	
Crime and Disorder	There are no direct implications for crime and disorder, arising from the proposals set out in this report.
Health Inequalities	There are no direct implications for public health, arising from the proposals in this report.
Area or Ward affected	All

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Income from fees and charges form an important element of the budget and the financial sustainability of the Council as set out in the long-term forecast.

Similarly to previous years, Departments have been asked to review their fees and charges on an individual basis as changes may need to be made to meet specific aims or strategic objectives or in some cases in response to external factors.

Where the Council has a discretion over fees, the review of those fees and charges has been set against the following key principles:

- general inflationary increases where possible or lower where appropriate / justified
- amounts rounded for ease of application, which may result in a slightly above inflation increase.
- on a cost recovery basis as necessary
- reflect statutory requirements.
- to meet specific priorities or service delivery aims / objectives

The Council continues to face a number of significant financial challenges in 2025/26 and beyond. It is therefore important that fees and charges are considered against this context to balance the various issues highlighted above.

Income budgets included in the detailed estimates will reflect any required changes from the proposed fees and charges set out in this report.

The costs referred to in this report that may be recovered through licence fees include:
• Administration – basic office administration to process the licence application, including photocopying, postage or the cost of handling fees through the accounts department. This could also include the costs of specialist licensing software to maintain an effective database, and printing licences.

• Initial visit/s – The officer time of premises visits as part of the authorisation process; including travel time and ‘on costs’.
• Third party costs – Some licensing processes will require third party input from experts, such as qualified vehicle testing engineers
• Liaison with interested parties – Engaging with responsible authorities and other stakeholders both in time and resources.
• Management costs – to reflect the cost of reviewing applications etc by the Head of Service.
• Local democracy costs – The necessary expenditure in arranging committee meetings or hearings to consider applications, review existing licences or respond to problems..
• On costs – including recharges for payroll, accommodation, including heating and lighting, and supplies and services connected with the licensing functions.
• Development, determination and production of licensing policies – The cost of consultation and publishing policies.
• Web material – The cost for this work.
• Advice and guidance – This includes advice in person, production of leaflets or promotional tools, and online advice.
• Setting and reviewing fees – This includes the cost of time associated with the review, as well as the cost of taking it to this Committee for approval.
• Additional monitoring and inspection visits – The cost of visits to premises in between licensing inspections and responding to complaints.
• Registers and national reporting – where relevant, the cost of producing registers and providing submissions to central government etc.

The charge for Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service Checks (DBS) is determined by the Disclosure & Barring Service or otherwise set by the current service provider.

An assessment of the costs of the administration of the various Licences for which this Committee is responsible has been undertaken.

PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

Set against the current fees and charges for 2025/26, **Appendix A** includes the schedule of fees and charges proposed for 2026/27, which have been developed by applying the key principles highlighted above and, amongst other matters.

Where the Council has discretion over fees, it will seek to recover the costs associated with processing applications for licences as well as the administration and monitoring of compliance with conditions. The fees charged should be capable of withstanding legal challenge, should the need arise.

It is not permitted to make a surplus, nor to subsidise, and so where such situations have arisen, fees and charges are adjusted in succeeding years to achieve and maintain the correct balance.

Decisions regarding the Licensing Fees and Charges are for the Licensing and Registration Committee to consider and determine.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

The fee schedule for 2025/26 was determined by the Licensing and Registration Committee on 20 January 2025 – Minute 39 refers.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL
No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

APPENDICES
Appendix A – Detailed fees and charges 2026/27 for Democratic Services and Elections, Licensing Section.

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)	
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LIST OF CURRENT FEES AND THE PROPOSED INCREASES

Key to Notes	
Local Set	These fees are set by Local Government to a cost natural basis.
Scoped Fees	The regulations allow a minimum and maximum fee to be charged. The fees laid out are within this scope.
Set Fees	The regulations set out a standard fee to be charged.

TAXI / PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES	Current Fee £	Proposed Fee £	% Increase	Notes
Grant Fee excluding mechanical tests*	297	312	5.05	Local Set
Renewal Fee excluding mechanical tests*	285	299	5.05	Local Set
Temporary Plate (Insurance) excluding mechanical test*	57	62	8.06	Local Set
Change of Vehicle excluding mechanical test*	57	62	8.06	Local Set
Change of Owner	20	22	10.00	Local Set
* Mechanical Tests are paid at cost from garage.				
TAXI / PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Grant / Renewal application (Three years)	175	185	5.71	Local Set
Grant / Renewal application (Two years)	145	155	6.90	Local Set
Grant / Renewal application (One years)	115	125	8.70	Local Set
Suitability Test and application pack	35	37	5.71	Local Set
Knowledge Test (per test)	25	27	8.00	Local Set
Medical, Passenger Assistance Training, Disability Awareness Training, Child Sexual Exploitation Training, Disclosure Barring Service Application are at additional cost which is at cost price via third party.				
PRIVATE HIRE OPERATORS	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Licence for five years, includes up to three vehicles	425	445	4.71	Local Set
Licence for five years, includes four or more vehicles	600	628	4.71	Local Set
Amendment to PHO Licence such as additional registrations	20	22	10.00	Local Set
MISCELLANOUS FOR TAXI / PRIVATE HIRE	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Mogo Plate Brackets	15	15	0	Local Set
Plate Pegs	2	2	0	Local Set
Replacement Plate	15	15	0	Local Set
Replacement ID Card	15	15	0	Local Set
Replacement / Reissue Licence	15	15	0	Local Set
Change of Name or Address	15	15	0	Local Set

Best Practice Guidance:
Duration of driver licences 6.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (as amended), the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 and the Plymouth City Council Act 1975 set a standard length of three years for taxi and private hire vehicle driver licences. Any shorter duration licence should only be issued when the licensing authority thinks it is appropriate in the specific circumstances of the case. For example, where the licence holder's leave to remain in the UK is time-limited, the licensee has requested a shorter duration or the licence is only required to meet a short-term demand. Taxi and private hire vehicle licences should not be issued on a 'probationary' basis.

STREET TRADING CONSENT	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Grant/Renewal	615	615	0	Local Set
Dovercourt Market Grant/Renewal	87	87	0	Local Set
PAVEMENT LICENCE – BUSINESS & PLANNING ACT 2020 (AMENDED BY LEVELLING UP & REGENERATION ACT 2023)	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Grant (2yrs)	250	250	0	Max. £500
Renewal (2yrs)	175	175	0	Max. £350
SEX SHOP LICENCE	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Grant	1058	1058	0	Local Set
Renewal	758	758	0	Local Set
Transfer	435	435	0	Local Set
FILM CLASSIFICATIONS – LICENSING ACT 2003	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	
Set fee for Committee	300	310	3.33	Local Set
Officer Viewing Footage (60 mins)	30	32	6.67	Local Set
BOATS	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Boat Grant/Renewal	63	63	0	Local Set
Boatman Grant / Renewal (3yrs)	63	63	0	Local Set
SCRAP METAL	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Scrap Metal Site Licence (Grant)	369	369	0	Local Set
Scrap Metal Site Licence (Renewal)	219	240	9.59	Local Set
Scrap Metal Site Licence (Variation)	35	37	5.71	Local Set
Scrap Metal Collectors Licence (Grant)	231	231	0	Local Set
Scrap Metal Collectors Licence (Renewal)	150	150	0	Local Set
Scrap Metal Collectors Licence (Variation)	35	37	5.71	Local Set

GAMBLING LICENCES (Adult Gaming Centre, Betting, Bingo, Family Entertainment Centre)	Current Fee £	Proposed Fee £	% Increase	Notes
Grant	761	785	3.15	Scoped fees
Annual Fee	433	446	3.00	Scoped fees
Vary Licence	365	377	3.29	Scoped fees
Transfer Licence	110	114	3.64	Scoped fees
Reinstatement of Licence	97	100	3.09	Scoped fees
Provisional Statement	761	785	3.15	Scoped fees
Change of Circumstances	27	28	3.70	Scoped fees
Copy of Licence	15	15	0	Scoped fees
UNLICENSED FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE AND PRIZE GAMING	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
New Operator	300	300	N/A	Set Fees
Existing Operator	100	100	N/A	Set Fees
Renewal	300	300	N/A	Set Fees
Change of Name	25	25	N/A	Set Fees
Copy of Permit	15	15	N/A	Set Fees
CLUB GAMING AND CLUB MACHINE PERMIT	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
New Operator	200	200	N/A	Set Fees
Existing Operator	100	100	N/A	Set Fees
Renewal	200	200	N/A	Set Fees
Variation of Permit	100	100	N/A	Set Fees
Copy of Permit	15	15	N/A	Set Fees
Annual Fee	50	50	N/A	Set Fees

LICENSED PREMISES (PUBS)	Current Fee £	Proposed Fee £	% Increase	Notes
New Operator	150	150	N/A	Set Fees
Existing Operator	100	100	N/A	Set Fees
Variation of Permit	100	100	N/A	Set Fees
Transfer of Permit	25	25	N/A	Set Fees
Change of Name	25	25	N/A	Set Fees
Copy of Permit	15	15	N/A	Set Fees
Annual Fee	50	50	N/A	Set Fees
Notice of Intention. Two or less Category C or D Gaming Machines	50	50	N/A	Set Fees
SMALL SOCIETY LOTTERIES	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Grant	40	40	N/A	Set Fees
Annual Fee	20	20	N/A	Set Fees
TEMPORARY USE NOTICE	**Current Fee £**	**Proposed Fee £**	**% Increase**	**Notes**
Grant	230	230	0	Scoped fees