



**LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL**

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

ITEM OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

Licensing Regulatory Committee

Thursday, 17 April 2014

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LICENSING REGULATORY COMMITTEE

**Conditions of Application for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licences
17 April 2014**

Report of Licensing Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable Members to consider the removal of the current requirement for all new applicants for hackney carriage and private hire drivers licences to complete a BTEC course 'Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire' or hold an equivalent qualification.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the requirement for all new applicants for a hackney carriage or private hire driver's licence to complete a BTEC course 'Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire' or hold an equivalent qualification be removed.

1.0 Report

1.1 Members may be aware that since September 2008 it has been a prerequisite that all new applicants for a hackney carriage and private driver's licence must pass the BTEC course in Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire.

1.2 Although the licensing authority did not stipulate which college the course had to be taken at, most of the applicants took the course at Lancaster and Morecambe College as they had been fundamental in the introduction of the course in 2008. The report which was considered in 2008 is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

1.3 Members will note from the attached report that the cost of the course when introduced was £198; in fact it has remained at that price since that time although negotiations did take place with the college approximately 2 years ago when they considered increasing the cost to just over £300.

1.4 Recently a new applicant has contacted the licensing department and informed officers that the cost of the course has now increased to £675. Officers contacted the college who confirmed that funding had been removed and that the course would now cost £675. There has been no prior notification or warning to the licensing department and this is disappointing.

1.5 Members will be aware that recently a local knowledge test was re-introduced for all new applicants for hackney carriage and private hire drivers licences and that even more recently the DVSA test, which is a practical driving test, was approved to be

introduced with effect from the 1 April 2014, together with a requirement for any driver of a wheelchair accessible vehicle to pass the taxi wheelchair exercise. An incidental advantage of the DVSA test is that a lot of insurance companies offer a discount on premiums for vehicles which will be driven by drivers who have passed the assessment.

1.6 The BTEC course covered the following:-

- Customer service for passenger transport
- Disability awareness
- Equal opportunities
- Taxi and private hire regulations
- Taxi and private hire safety

The expected course outcomes are: -

- To comply with legislation
- To improve customer service
- To improve image and reputation
- To implement best practice

1.7 If the requirement to pass the course is removed there are obvious elements which would be missing from the driver training, namely the customer service and disability awareness training

1.8 Members may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to request that officers investigate whether there is a less costly alternative that could cover these elements and to report back to this committee as soon as possible if such an option exists. This could possibly be a requirement for new drivers to complete an NVQ before the first renewal of their licence.

1.9 If members resolve to remove the requirement for new applicants to pass the BTEC course it is recommended that a proviso is attached to any new grant of a licence in the immediate future whilst an option of alternative training is explored, that the applicant may be required to complete any training approved before the first renewal of the licence.

1.10 In the meantime and with the above factors in mind officers consider that it is too onerous and too costly to expect new applicants to pay £675 to do the BTEC course

1.11 Officers recommend that the requirement to pass the BTEC course prior to the grant of a driver's licence be removed and that other options be explored to cover the missing elements and reported back to committee as soon as possible.

2.0 Conclusion

2.1 Members are requested to approve the proposed change.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The conditions of application are in place to protect the public.

The proposed changes do not have the potential to cause negative impact or discriminate against different groups in the community based on age, disability, gender, race/ethnicity, religion or religious belief (faith), sexual orientation, or rural isolation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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LICENSING REGULATORY COMMITTEE

TRAINING FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

24TH JULY 2008

Report of Licensing Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report is to seek Members' approval of proposals to introduce training arrangements for all new applicants for hackney carriage and private hire drivers' licences.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended:

- 1. To approve that a new condition be attached to applications for the grant of hackney carriage and private hire drivers' licences requiring applicants to attain the Edexcel/BTec Level 2 award in Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire; and**
- 2. That the above conditions be imposed in respect of all new applications for the grant of hackney carriage and private hire drivers' licences made as from 1st September 2008.**

1.0 Report

- 1.1 As Members will be aware, at previous meetings of hackney carriage and private hire proprietors' forums and of the Taxi Liaison Group held over the past 12 months, discussions have been held on the subject of providing training for hackney carriage and private hire drivers.
- 1.2 At the meeting of the Taxi Liaison Group held in January 2008, representatives of the main taxi companies and other drivers' representatives expressed their support for officers' proposals to explore the possibility of introducing a structured training course for all new hackney carriage and private hire drivers for the purpose of raising standards of local taxi services.
- 1.3 In view of the above support from the trade representatives, Mrs Morrison, Senior Licensing Officer, engaged in discussions with the Lancaster and Morecambe College regarding the possible options for the introduction of an appropriate training course for all new hackney carriage and private hire drivers. For comparison

purposes, Mrs Morrison also consulted certain other Councils where driver training has been introduced. At Preston and South Ribble for example, it is currently a condition of all new applications for the grant of a hackney carriage and private hire driver's licence that applicants must attain the Edexcel/BTec Level 2 Award in Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire. Consultations held with certain other Councils have revealed that various other types of training courses are also in operation. However, having assessed all options for driver training, officers consider that the contents of the Edexcel/BTec Level 2 course currently implemented at Preston and South Ribble is the most suitable one for use at Lancaster.

The course programme includes: -

- Customer service for passenger transport
- Disability awareness
- Equal opportunities
- Topography and route planning
- Taxi and private hire regulations
- Taxi and private hire safety

The expected course outcomes are: -

- To comply with legislation
- To improve customer service
- To improve image and reputation
- To implement best practice

- 1.4 Accordingly, discussions with the Lancaster and Morecambe College focussed on the development of the above driver training qualification for implementation in this area. Discussions regarding the above have also been held with trade representatives of the Taxi Liaison Group. In order to assess the suitability of the above qualification, the College ran a pilot course in March 2008. Fortunately, due to one-off funding being made available by certain external sources, the College was able to provide the above pilot course free of charge. Five trade members of the Taxi Liaison Group, including certain directors of the main taxi companies, attended the above course, which lasted for four days. All persons having attended the course passed the two multiple-choice question papers and therefore have attained the above qualification.
- 1.5 The attendees of the above course were asked for the feedback to establish whether or not they had found it to be beneficial and also whether any improvements should be made to the course contents. All those having attended the above course were generally very satisfied about the content of the course and felt that its implementation in the Lancaster district would help to improve driver standards and also the reputation of the local taxi trade generally. Certain officers from the licensing group also attended different sessions of the course to assist in the evaluation process. Also, Jim Trotman, Senior Tourism Officer kindly attended a session and provided a brief on the importance of providing a high standard of customer service and its impact on local tourism and the economy. Whilst everyone having an involvement in the course was generally pleased with the course content, it was however felt that in order to reduce the costs, the course could be condensed into three days instead of four.
- 1.6 Further discussions have since been held with the Lancaster and Morecambe College, and also the course lecturer regarding arrangements for running the above course. It has been agreed that with certain minor operational changes, the course could be run over three weekdays from 9:00am to 5:00pm. The College has stated

that the cost of the course including tuition, course materials, registration/certification fees and light refreshment, will be £198 per candidate. A copy of a letter from the College enclosing details of the proposed course arrangements is attached at Appendix 1. As Members will note from the attached letter, provisional arrangements have been made for the first course to commence on 29th September 2008. However, confirmation of the above arrangements is dependent on the Committee's approval of the officers' recommendation that with effect from 1st September 2008, a new condition be attached to applications for the grant of a hackney carriage and private hire driver's licence, that the applicant attains the Edexcel/BTec Level 2 Award in Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire.

- 1.7 Should Members be minded to approve the implementation of the above driver training proposals, Mr Trotman from Morecambe Tourism Service has agreed to provide input into each course. Also, officers from the licensing group would have partial involvement in the delivery of such courses and would assist in providing information regarding the hackney carriage and private hire legislation. Costs associated with Council officers' involvement in the driver training courses would be absorbed within existing budgets. As the proposed driver training course includes topography and route planning, it would no longer be necessary for applicants for hackney carriage and private hire drivers' licences to undergo a knowledge test at the Council's licensing office, as all the necessary driver knowledge criteria would be covered within the external training course held at Lancaster and Morecambe College.

2.0 Conclusion

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the proposed arrangements set out in this report for the implementation of a structured training course for all new applicants for the grant of a hackney carriage driver's and a private hire driver's licence. At this stage, it is not proposed to impose such training arrangements on all existing hackney carriage and private hire drivers. However, as Members are aware, applications for the renewal of hackney carriage and private hire drivers' licences are frequently referred to the Licensing Regulatory Committee mainly in view of certain convictions recorded against the applicant. In such circumstances, should Members be minded to allow the renewal of a driver's licence they could, if considered appropriate, impose a requirement that the applicant attains the above qualification in the same way as that applicable to all new applicants. It is not known whether the introduction of a driver training scheme will have an affect the numbers of new applications for hackney carriage and private hire drivers' licences, although this will be monitored over time and any necessary adjustments will be made through the licensing budgetary process.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None applicable to this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a result of this report. Any staff input would be from within existing resources.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comment.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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