

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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