

## **CHANGING FROM NATIONAL DRIVING STANDARDS AGENCY DRIVING TEST TO LOCAL TRANSPORT FOR BUCKS TAILORED SCHEME**

### **1 Purpose**

To consider moving from the nationally used Driving Standards Agency (DSA) system for testing new drivers to a locally organised and tailored testing scheme run by Transport for Bucks (TfB) BCC.

### **2 Recommendations**

The committee authorise the Licensing Services Manager to consult with the trade and other local, relevant organisations on the detailed content of a tailor made driving course in respect to taxi and private hire driver applicants and report back to committee in due course

### **3 Supporting information**

- 3.1 Currently, hackney carriage and private hire operators, drivers and vehicles are principally governed by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Town Police Clauses Act 1847, Council byelaws and the conditions implemented by the licensing authority
- 3.2 Aylesbury Vale District Council licence approximately 1000 drivers, these are fairly split between private hire and hackney carriage licensees. Each year approximately 100 new applicants come to this authority to be licensed and a similar number cease working. Renewal drivers renew licences every 3 years so approximately 350 renewal licences are determined each year. This totals approximately 450 driver applications that are administered by this authority each year.
- 3.3 This council has a duty to ensure that applicants for a private hire or hackney carriage drivers licence are "fit and proper" for the purpose of obtaining the licence. This is currently done by ascertaining medical fitness through a Group 2 medical check, a Criminal Record Check to check relevant criminal conduct and, for new drivers, a Driving Standards Agency (DSA) taxi test as recommended by the Department for Transport.
- 3.4 The DSA taxi test is a physical driving test undertaken by a DSA approved instructor. It is arranged by the applicant directly with the DSA and a successful applicant would bring the completed DSA certificate to this council to support their application for a licence.
- 3.5 This authority have been informed that due to such high demand for this test there is a now a long waiting list with the DSA, often over 3 months. Further the relevance of the DSA test, whilst tailored to private hire and taxi driving, remains fairly static and does not approach local issues.

- 3.6 Due to the delay in obtaining a DSA test and a desire for us to offer a tailored testing package, AVDC have approached BCC Transport for Bucks (TfB) who currently design driving courses for new drivers, elderly drivers and refresher courses among others. During a series of meetings with TfB a tailored driving package has been prepared for both new and existing private hire and hackney carriage drivers. Appendix 1 attached is a scoping document currently in development for the provision of this procedure.
- 3.7 The cost of the training package will be comparable to the DSA test at approximately £95 per applicant, however the course will be tailored to offer both a 2 hour driving test as well as a 2 hour classroom based theory element that will address issues most relevant to this authority.
- 3.8 It is intended to use this course for all new drivers and also for it to be completed by all existing drivers on their subsequent renewal for one time only. Within 3 years all existing licensed drivers will have undergone this assessment.
- 3.9 The course could also be used in conjunction with our current policy on enforcement and it is envisaged that this would be employed by the council to deal with drivers who have received repeat complaints of bad driving standards. On occasion a driver may be reported to this authority for an act of careless or dangerous driving. In the first instance a conversation is held with the driver and a note appended to the file, however where a second such complaint is received we would look to this test as a means of “restorative” justice.
- 3.10 As the test is tailored locally and the theory test would be taken at the AVDC office, it would be easy for us to change the course details at any time to incorporate new local issues. Interest has been expressed by local disability organisations and Thames Valley Police who are keen to provide input into this test.
- 3.11 The theory and the practical test may be taken separately at reduced cost in order that restorative justice may be proportionate to the requirements. Some drivers may require a refresher course in the theory or the practical and the ability to separate the two has been considered.
- 3.12 BCC TfB would be able to offer tests to drivers fairly quickly, however built into the service Level Agreement between AVDC and BCC TfB will be agreed timescales so drivers are not waiting too long for tests.

#### **4 Options considered**

The Council may retain the DSA test due to the national recognition, however we feel that this is not conducive to a flexible and proportional training scheme, nor do we feel that the waiting list for the test is appropriate to drivers who require a licence in order to start working.

#### **5 Reasons for Recommendation**

To ensure that Aylesbury Vale District Council are able to provide a smart, flexible and wholly appropriate testing regime to both new applicants and renewal applicants (once only)

#### **6 Resource implications**

There will be no financial implications to the licensing department, all fees are paid directly from the applicant to BCC TfB.

**7 Response to Key Aims and Outcomes**

There are none

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Background Documents	None