

REPORT ON THE INTRODUCTION OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE TEST FOR TAXI DRIVERS.

Purpose

- 1.1 To seek the authorisation of Licensing Committee to introduce a functional English language test and knowledge test for taxi drivers.

2 Recommendations/for decision

- 2.1 To introduce a functional English language test and a knowledge test for all new and existing hackney carriage and private hire drivers; and
- 2.2 To authorise the Principal Licensing Officer to agree and confirm the content of such tests.

3 Supporting information

- 3.1 In March earlier this year, as part of a report relating to the significant impact of the Deregulation Act Members of Licensing Committee agreed that a functional English language test be introduced for all hackney carriage and private hire drivers; and that officers explore the introduction of a knowledge test. Both of these are pre-requisites of most of the Vale's neighbouring authorities and therefore might explain the significant increase in driver applications from drivers who do not reside in the Vale.
- 3.2 The testing of English language and a limited topographical test were also one of a number of recommendations of a recently published report from an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Taxis.
- 3.3 Officers have been investigating existing and other available tests. As applications are completed on-line, something few other authorities have yet to develop the guiding principle has been to find a test that can be delivered by a reliable third party. An applicant would then be expected to submit a satisfactory certificate of completion with their application. The same principle applies currently with taxi driver training. All drivers are required to arrange testing with a nominated company at their own convenience and expense and submit a completion certificate with their application.
- 3.4 Officers have had discussions with a company who offer an electronic knowledge test. The test will cover geography of the Vale including routes and points of interest and basic maths and English. It will also include basic knowledge of expected behaviour standards translated from standard conditions of licences. The software can also provide e-learning on safeguarding and officers are currently investigating its viability.
- 3.5 The licensing service can set the number of questions generated from each category, pass rates and time limits. Each test will randomly generate questions from a pool from each category based on our parameters. No two drivers will take the same series of questions. The questions are multiple choice with one correct answer and 3 incorrect answers. The cost per driver is currently £30, although given the economies of scale there may be room for negotiation.
- 3.6 Officers will need to develop the content of the software and possibly test it on a sample of existing drivers. Members are not expected to agree the detailed content of the test but authorise its introduction. Once fully developed and prior to implementation officers would happily demonstrate it to Members. In any event a progress report will be brought back to Licensing Committee.

4 Options considered

4.1 None

5 Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 Recommendation based on previous Licensing Committee decision.

6 Resource implications

6.1 Cost of testing will be met by taxi trade.

Contact Officer
Background Documents

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None